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A WAYFARER IN  
YUGOSLAVIA







FROM THE LAKE OF SKADAR

# A WAYFARER IN YUGOSLAVIA

*by*

LOVETT FIELDING EDWARDS

*With 16 plates  
and endpaper maps*

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## NOTE

### ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF YUGOSLAV NAMES

IN this book I have made no attempt to anglicize Yugoslav proper names, with the exception of Belgrade (Serbo-Croat: Beograd) and Yugoslavia (Serbo-Croat: Jugoslavija), which would seem absurd to an English reader in their proper form.

Otherwise I have used the Latin Croatian spelling throughout. Slovene has the same phonetics and the same alphabet, Serb the same phonetics but the Cyrillic alphabet.

Serb and Croat are practically the same, with slight dialect differences, with which it is unnecessary to worry the average reader. Slovene is different, but with similar orthography, so that no one need anticipate any difficulties. All the South Slav dialects are mutually comprehensible, including Bulgarian, though in the case of Slovene a certain amount of oral practice is advisable. Speaking Serbo-Croat reasonably well, I can travel easily and make myself everywhere understood from Mt. Triglav to the Black Sea. Most educated persons in Croatia and Slovenia speak German and French, in Dalmatia, German, Italian, and often English, in Serbia and South Serbia, French. In all large towns there is a group of English-speaking persons, usually with a club.

Serbo-Croat is strictly phonetic. One sound is almost designated by one character; in the Cyrillic alphabet always. The foreigner cannot go far wrong if he uses 'continental' vowels and English consonants, with the following exceptions:

*c* is always *ts*, as in cats. Example: Car—Tsar. "ica" is common geographical ending, e.g. Planica—Planitsa, or Crikvenica—Tsrikvenitsa.



*č* is *ch* in church. Example: Čačak—Chachak.

*ć* is similar, but softer, as *t* in the Cockney pronunciation of tube. Most Serb and many Croat and Slovene family names end in *ć*.

For practical purposes *č* and *ć* may be regarded as the same.

*dj* is English *j* in judge, the English *j* in fact.

*dž* is practically the same, but harder. It is usually found in words of Turkish origin, e.g. džamija = mosque.

*j* is always soft, the English *y*. Example: Jugoslavija—Yugoslavi(y)a. After *n* or *l*, it merely softens those consonants, without being separately pronounced, as *n* in news. Examples: Ulcinj and Bitolj. In the Cyrillic *nj* and *lj* are single letters.

*r* is sometimes a vowel, strongly rolled. Hence such words as trg—square, or vrh—summit. Crna Gora—Ts(e)rna Gora—Montenegro.

*š* is *sh*, as in shake. Example: Sušak—Sushak.

*ž* is *zh*, as *z* in azure. E.g. Župa—Zhupa; cf. French *j* in jamais.

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# I

## THE GATEWAY TO YUGOSLAVIA: SUŠAK

I AM beginning this book on a Wednesday, because the old Moslem astrologer told me to. I had been to see him before, and was drawn to consult him again; perhaps because of my love for learned men of all creeds which the stars had told him was in my character. He was sitting cross-legged in his little booth in the Sarajevo market, with a pile of dog-eared Arabic books beside him. His face, beneath his turban of gold lace, was good-humoured and lined. Mustafa and I greeted him:

‘Merhaba!’

and squatted opposite him on the wooden plank that served him for bed and counter. He stared at my Western dress, and put two pairs of scratched crystal spectacles on his watery old eyes before he recognized me. Then he sent his apprentice out for coffee.

We started chatting, Mustafa asked him how old he was.

‘I am seventy-six.’

‘And how many children have you?’

‘Nine. The youngest is eighteen months.’

Decidedly the stars love their votaries!

It was five years since I had last consulted the stars. Would I care to consult them again? He smiled good-humouredly:

‘I can tell you what is written there, but dear Allah alone knows if they speak the truth.’

Mustafa, too, smiled: ‘At least we can see.’

The old man searched among his books for his guide to the stars, and then asked me my name and those of my father and mother. The strange English sounds worried him, and he kept repeating them to get them

right. He noted them down in Arabic characters, and from them calculated the mystic number that was to tell me my fate. Then he murmured an Arabic prayer and turned to his book, with his huge tomato-coloured nose almost touching the page.

'Speak Serbian,' said Mustafa. 'The gospodin understands.'

He began murmuring in a broad Bosnian dialect, which I could scarcely follow, and had to keep turning to Mustafa for explanation. He spoke much about the influences of the stars and about illnesses and family affairs, the principal subjects on which his clients usually consulted him. Some of his guesses were startlingly near the truth, and others I hope may become so. Then he said that I was a great traveller, and Mustafa gently interposed that I was even now on a long journey through all Yugoslavia. Finally he ended:

'And, my son, whenever you wish to ask a favour of any man, approach him on the right, and whenever you wish to succeed in any venture, commence it on a Wednesday,' and closed his book.

Therefore I have commenced this book on a Wednesday.

. . . . .

Sušak is the gateway to Yugoslavia, but few people linger in the gate. But it is worth while, and I determined to remain a day or two before going south.

It is not in itself an interesting town, being comparatively modern. Until the Great War it was a suburb of Rijeka (Fiume), which the condottiere exploits of D'Annunzio forced the Yugoslavs to hand over to the Italians, despite the terms of the peace treaty. Fifty years ago it was a few woodstores and one house, and the suburb of Brajdica was a marsh given over entirely to frogs. But there are some interesting places close at hand.

Trsat, for example. In the days when Sušak was a

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is still fiercely debated by professors. But the real power of the Croatian people was held by a few noble families, of which the most important were the Šubić-Zrinjskis and the Frankopans. One still finds traces of their rule all along the coast as far south as Trogir. Trsat became one of the most important Frankopan strongholds.

But it was in May 1291 that the miracle occurred that made Trsat famous. Visitors may interpret it according to their degree of faith or credibility. It was then that the angels brought from Nazareth to Trsat the house of the Virgin, performing this feat of house-moving in a single night and placing the holy house on the site of the present Frankopan church. But apparently the people of Trsat were considered unworthy of so great a trust, for in February 1294 the angelic messengers again removed the holy building, this time to Recanati in Italy, where it is still famous as the shrine of Loretto. But Trsat has always remained a place of pious pilgrimage.

The castle remained the property of the Frankopans until that unlucky family was at last extinguished by the execution of the last of the line for high treason at Wiener-Neustadt in 1671. Thence it passed through many hands and was much neglected until at last in 1826 it became the property of the Austrian Count Nugent, of an Anglo-French family distantly connected with the Frankopans. The last of that family, the old Countess Nugent, still lives in its battered ruins, and there I determined to visit her.

It was a sufferingly hot day. But even many years of Yugoslavia have not accustomed me to the siesta habit. I toiled slowly up the stairway and asked the way to the old castle, which I found in a small side street, marked with the cosmopolitan notice:

Entree u grad.

Sušak was occupied by the Italians between 1918 and 1923, and the castle suffered more in that short time than

in the many centuries that preceded it. Several bombs were dropped on it, and the ancient towers are badly damaged and few of the roofs intact. Those who know it from pre-war postcards will get a rude shock when they see it. Of the magnificent collection of paintings by da Vinci, Titian, Correggio, and many others, only a few portraits remain, miserably housed.

The glory is departed. But its shadow remains, more fascinating perhaps than the substance.

The last of the Nugents is a magnificent ruin, like her castle. She is very old, very poor and almost blind, but she still retains the manner of a grande dame. At first I spoke to her in Croatian, but as she answered in French, went on in that language. Sitting there on a bench just inside the gate, she looked rather like an old tortoise basking in the sun, but her language and manner were those of the vanished Imperial Court. More than once she has flatly refused entrance to tourists who have not shown her respect.

To me she showed signal honour, rising to show me the strange heraldic beast in bronze that is the arms of the Nugents. It is really a fantastic conception of that most fantastic of all arts. With the head of a cock, it combines the wings of a bat, the tail of a snake, and the breast of some powerful and unidentified beast, possibly a lion. This strange animal typifies the virtues of the family: alertness, speed, cunning, and power. Alas, they are no more, but on the pedestal beneath the motto of the clan may still be read. It is in Croat: 'Odlučio sam', I have determined.

Then she hobbled back to her seat and directed her one remaining retainer to show me the castle.

It is alive with history. But how many of the fantastic tales told me by the old custodian were true, it was hard to determine. For the Frankopans were a ferocious brood. Here is the niche where the beautiful young wife of Nikola Frankopan was walled up alive, and in the



oubliettes were found the skeletons of 656 men. Once, too, there was a secret passage to Rijeka, but it is now blocked up. It crosses the frontier, and would be too great a temptation for smugglers.

I dislike funerals, but have a weakness for graveyards. That of the Trsat castle is in the form of a tiny semicircle around the old chapel, and on the wall-niches may be seen the names of many famous Nugents and their relations, the Sforzas and Pallavicinis. One niche has been left for the old countess herself, who is now eighty-six. May she eventually rest more peacefully than her relations, for one of their graves had been pillaged the week before my visit by a party of Greek sailors looking for ghastly souvenirs. Ghouls! They would have satisfied their beastly tastes better by stealing some of the medieval instruments of torture, of which there is a good collection in the chapel itself. One tablet in particular moved me deeply. It is on the grave of a young English-woman who died during a visit to the countess. Amongst those famous and titled names, it reads quite simply: Jane Shaw.

But it is not merely to gloom about mortality that it is worth while to visit Trsat. From the so-called Roman tower one can look far out over the Quarnero, with its astonishing patchwork of colour on sea and land. The winds of the Quarnero are fickle and capricious, coming and going without apparent reason, and under their gentle pressure the sea towards evening turns to the most extravagant colours: cobalt, ultramarine, deep reddish purple, green, and the wonderful deep Adria blue.

Not that the Quarnero is always so mild. In winter the winds are terrible, and the offerings of sailors who have escaped their fury almost fill the Church of Our Lady of Trsat, which was built by the Frankopans on the site of the vanished House of the Virgin, stolen—so the people of Trsat put it—by the angels and transported to Italy.

I walked in there after leaving the castle and looked around. On a slab in the main aisle is an inscription stating that beneath lies the head of that most famous knight of Klis, Petar Kružić, the Uskok leader. But there was no one there to tell me of its historical associations, so I looked mostly at the many pictures of sailing ships battling with the waves, and read the pious vows of those who had survived.

Most of them were local vessels which had escaped from the dreaded Quarnero, but now and again they came from farther afield. One particularly spirited drawing had the inscription, in Croat:

The ship *Szent Laszlo* of the Royal Hungarian Lloyd, which lost her rudder on June 8, 1893, in the St. George's Channel. In memory of her fortunate arrival at Holyhead. Donated by the officers. Captain Felice Franciscs.

Needless to say, the vast majority of the former Austro-Hungarian naval and merchant sailors were Croats.

Amongst these offerings appears, somewhat incongruously, a double-page newspaper illustration of the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912.

In the evening there is not very much to do or see at Sušak. One can walk up and down the Corso and admire the local beauties, sit in one of the cafés, or go to the little 'Zemun' restaurant on the island by the frontier bridge, which serves Serbian specialities, and where you may reach out your hand and touch Italy. Most of the local people have frontier passes and go into Rijeka or to Abbazia (Opatija). There I went too, to spend the evening, and regretted it.

For there is a bad side to the development of tourism. To imagine the beautiful Dalmatian coast turned into a greater Abbazia would be a nightmare. The place is a welter of hotels, restaurants and 'bars'; bars, I mean, in the continental sense, which means poor cabaret shows, expensive drinks and *animierdamen*. There is scarcely

a place where the sea is not cut off by some notice of private possession. It is like one of Mr. Wells's pleasuredomains of the future, which I hope we shall never see. But it seems to please the Magyars, who are the principal guests. Personally, I went back into Yugoslavia with relief.

The next day was still hot, but I could not leave Sušak yet. I was waiting for some letters. Therefore I determined to make a short trip into the Gorski Kotar. There, on the mountains and in the forest, it would at least be cool, and I could be back by the evening.

But to get there one has to travel through a wide band of barren karst. Every one who has been to Dalmatia knows the karst. It is characteristic and inescapable. But its desolate wildness adds a greater charm by contrast to the little fertile poljes and the old cities by the seashore.

It is a vast stretch of limestone rock, reaching from Istria down to Albania and beyond. The stone is bare and porous, so that it can hold little earth and less water. It is almost impossible to scratch a living out of it, for the forests that once held the soil precariously in place have long ago been felled by Turks or Venetians, and what they left the goats have destroyed. It is fantastically honeycombed by huge caves and ghylls, where the Dalmatian rivers appear and disappear at will. Several, like the Ombla or the Bosna, spring full grown out of the rocky hillside, while their upper courses wind darksome among the mountain caverns, impossible to trace. The soil, such as it is, is collected into tiny pockets among the stones, *vrtači*, too shallow for the plough, and may yield a few ears of maize only after long and painful toil with the hoe. The few towns or villages of the inland karst are situated on the poljes, which are for the most part river valleys where there is soil and water, and these make up for the barrenness of the land by an extraordinary fertility. Sometimes these rivers are seasonal, flooding the poljes in spring till they become vast lakes, and

disappearing in summer into gyhlls or ponors, to continue their course mysteriously underground until the melting snows force them once more to the surface. This accounts for the diverse tales of travellers. Some speak of immense lakes, where others, a few months later, will find not a drop of water, but only broad acres of corn or stunted Bosnian maize or the mathematically exact lines of the tobacco plants, each field with its little tablet to certify that the Government tobacco monopoly has numbered the plants and given permission to the growers. How the inhabitants of the more distant villages contrive to scrape a living is a mystery. But they are among the most vigorous and hardy of the Yugoslavs and make some of the finest troops in the world. Mostly they have large families, and, in the days when America was a free country, they used to emigrate in large numbers. Now, they are one of the chief sources of energy in the Yugoslav state.

I shall have much to say of the karst later, in Bosnia, in Montenegro, and in the Hercegovina, where it is even wilder and more fantastic.

But the sparse rocky soil is especially good for wine and for olives and figs, which are among the staple products of Dalmatia, and the people are beginning to make use of the few bushes which grow naturally in the interstices of the stones: wild asparagus, pomegranates, and all manner of medicinal herbs such as capers, salvia, rosemary, and pyrethrum.

The karst around Sušak is not so rich even in these few poor products. In the winter the dreaded bora wind sweeps down with terrific force, uprooting the bushes, and biting through the most efficient overcoat. At Škrljevo, where the train halted, the station building was buttressed about by tremendous windbreaks of stone. All along the more exposed portions of the track one may find these windbreaks, looking like the walls of forgotten fortresses, for, in the winter, the force of the wind is enough to derail a train.

Yet there are compensations in the karst, even for the tourist. After travelling for an hour or so through a fantastic lunar landscape where the fields look like forgotten graveyards, it is one of the most breath-taking sights in the world to come suddenly in sight of the brilliant blue of the Adriatic far below, with its fringe of steely olive groves, dark cypresses, and terraced vineyards. And it has a strange beauty of its own, which one admits grudgingly, but in the end grows to love. It is a beauty of the Arabian nights, where each stony outcrop may turn in the evening light to the City of Brass, and where one would not be surprised to see the sun suddenly darkened by the wings of Sindbad's roc.

We waited at Škrlevo for the connection from Rijeka. The air was hot and filled with the humming of insects, and the swallow-tailed butterflies made patches of colour on the bare stone. A family of cats, playing on the rails and under the train, kept us in a fever of anxiety, but they evidently knew the time-table better than we, for before the Rijeka connection arrived they were all in safety, with the mother cat purring satisfaction.

There are strange survivals in these valleys of the karst. Peoples and customs, long extinct elsewhere, continue to survive in their barren solitudes. Here, near Sušak, in the Graveyard Valley (Grobničko Polje), there are still villages that differ entirely from their Slav neighbours in costumes, features, and manner of life. Possibly they are descendants of that vanished empire of the Avars, whose very name has disappeared from Europe. Or possibly they are descendants of the Tatars, who were defeated here in 1241, and whose unclean blood, according to popular tradition, has rendered the valley for ever barren. Certainly they have still a Mongolian appearance and a bellicose temperament, and have managed to survive the terrible carnage of 1522 when Jakov Dur of Pazin and Ivan Abfalter of Rijeka defeated the Turks on the same spot.

But I did not want to stop anywhere in the bare karst-land on so hot a day, so stayed and chatted in the restaurant car until we had lost sight of the Adriatic and climbed into the forest country of the Gorski Kotar. It was all the same to me where I got out, so waited until I saw a pleasant little station high up in the mountains, with the silvery sparkle of a trout-stream in the valley below. It was Fužine.

The history of Fužine may be told in two lines. It was a hunting lodge of the Šubić-Zrinjski family, and was well known for its swords and pikes in the days when iron was still smelted by charcoal. Its name is a Slav corruption of the Italian word for a foundry.

I did not regret my excursion to Fužine. For one thing, every one there was smiling, which gave the place an air of welcome. A single sour face is often enough to put one off a place so thoroughly that no amount of natural beauty can make up.

I found the chairman of the local tourist committee hard at work painting the rooms of the one pension and mending tables and chairs for the coming season. For Fužine wishes to become a tourist resort, and it has all the natural qualities for one. But foreign visitors, according to him, were for the future. The village was proud of its electric light plant, but wanted a waterworks before advertising its attractions to the world. Foreign visitors had been few—he looked up his records and said I was the third Englishman to come here since the war—but, though welcome, he was afraid that the primitive conditions would frighten them. I tried to reassure him. Those who come to Fužine will come to fish or to rest, and there is ample opportunity for both. The village is clean and the food good; those who require luxury may go elsewhere.

There is an air of hopeful striving about Fužine. People are working for the future and talking about the future, unhampered by the shadows of the past. And the

one real necessity of the village, a good road, is now being provided.

I walked up to the Preradović summit through the forest to get a general idea of the countryside. The cool, soft smell of the pines at mid-day was like a tonic after the burning karst. Below in the valley meandered the crystal ribbon of the Ličanka, which has first-class mountain trout and the most extraordinarily succulent crayfish. There is a little lake, too, and a bathing place.

Over a low divide is the wide Ličko Polje, where the people are the descendants of the fierce Uskoks, half pirates and half patriots, who defended Klis so gallantly against the Turks, and later made wind-swept Senj a place of fear to the Venetian ships so that their name became a proverb: 'Beware the hands of Senj!' But the Austrian emperor destroyed Senj and transported the Uskoks inland, to act as graničars or frontier troops, against the Turks. There they soon became the finest soldiers of the old monarchy, and their villages may be found all along the Croatian military frontiers. Fužine is not far from the former frontier.

It was very pleasant up there in the forest, and it was almost dark before I found my way down. I was just able to distinguish the one memorial to the one famous citizen of Fužine, Franjo Rački, the historian of the Bogumils. When I got back to the railway station, it was already dark. I had still about two hours to wait for my train, and the cold air had given me an appetite.

The station was dark and deserted. After wandering about and bumping my shins on piles of timber and goods trucks, I set out to find something to eat. A single light was showing in the window of a tiny kafana, whence came sounds of music and singing. I stumbled through a darkened garden and tapped on the pane. The music stopped. A face looked out, smiling as all the faces in Fužine had smiled. 'Come in!'

I entered. The tiny room seemed entirely filled by the

six men inside. The landlord put down his guitar and looked at me doubtfully.

'Have you got anything to eat?'

'We haven't got anything suitable for a gospodin. Only some ham. But there's plenty to drink.'

'He's always trying to sell some one that ham,' remarked one of the company.

Still, it wasn't bad, fresh and home-cured, and in any case hunger is always an excellent sauce. I ordered some wine and determined to wait there for my train.

At first the company seemed ill at ease, till the landlord asked if I minded the singing. On the other hand I liked it, and took my wine over to their table. Introductions were made. It was a real pan-Slav gathering: two were peasants of the neighbourhood, Croats, one a Czech commercial traveller, one a Serb, one a Slovene railway employee, and the sixth one of those nondescript Russians that one finds everywhere in the Balkans. What was I? English. Whereon the Serb jumped up and kissed me vigorously on both cheeks, shouting out: 'An old ally!'

They were all very merry. It was evidently a great occasion, for they were drinking beer, which is expensive and not a peasant drink. Personally I dislike the sweet Yugoslav beer, and stuck to wine. The songs began again, every one joining in whether they knew the words or not. The Serb began:

Oj, Morava, moje selo ravno. . . .

until the Czech began a mournful ballad about some Bohemian worthy and the Russian followed with a Siberian convict song:

Kak iz ostrovo, iz proklyatovo . . .

Finally the Slovene commenced the most stirring of all marches: 'Regiment po cesti gre . . .' until all were shouting the chorus till I thought the rafters would fall.



The Russian, excited to bursting-point by song and beer, leapt up excitedly.

'Look at those men!' he shouted. 'They are the finest soldiers in the world. They can leave the rifle for the plough, or the plough for the rifle, and beat the finest armies in the world.'

'Shut up, you,' said one of the peasants. 'You never handled a plough in your life.'

'Or a rifle either,' added the Serb.

The Russian subsided and the songs recommenced. When at last I stumbled out into the darkness, they were trying to sing *Tipperary*, which they firmly believed to be the British national anthem. I caught the fast train as it was moving out.

. . . . .

My last day at Sušak I went up once more to the votive church, hoping to find the local priest, to get some more detailed information from him, or at least some story of the old days. I found him all right, but my efforts were cut short by his hospitality. Over a bottle of rakija (plum-brandy) we discussed democracy, Fascism, Communism, and religion in England. Again I nearly lost my luncheon and my boat.

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## II

### THE ISLAND OF THE FRANKOPANS: KRK

THAT afternoon the storm, which had so long been threatening, broke. We steamed down the Adriatic in a mist of driving rain and cloud, unusual for May, and unpleasant. The summits of the Velebit were scarcely visible in a swirl of vapour, and the tunny-fishing ladders looked like warning fingers, pointing upwards to dark and threatening skies.

That day there were no watchers. The sea was rough, and the chances of fishing bad. But on a clear day, or even more on a clear starlit night, the fishermen sit there unmoving, watching the surface of the waters. Usually they are at the entrances to narrow coves, where the tunny come in to feed. From his high perch, twenty or thirty feet above the water, the watcher can see far down into the depths and pick out, by day, the dark forms of the shoal, or by night the light shining on their scales. They are organized in small bands, each taking his two-hours' watch on the ladder. When the shoal is well within the bay, they close the entrance with nets and gradually round up the mass of giant fish. For the tunny grows to a very large size, and its steak-like flesh, preserved in oil, is a great delicacy. A good catch may prove the fortune of a group of fishermen, and there are great rejoicings when it is brought to port in one of the tiny fishing villages.

These tunny-ladders are typical of the Quarnero and the Croatian coast, but I have never seen them much south of Rab, or in Greece, despite the many references to the tunny in classical literature.

There are two routes to Baška, where I had determined to stop. But the more usual and far the more interesting

is down the narrow channel between the Velebit and the high, rocky shores of the island of Krk. The ship passes by Bakar, to stop at Kraljevica, Crikvenica, Novi Vinodol, Selce, and Senj, all of them important places in the history of Croatia, and all connected with the rule of the Zrinjski and Frankopan families, who so long held the lordship in these waters.

At Kraljevica the whole town is in the shadow of the Zrinjski castle, while at Novi of Vinodol the companion castle of the Frankopans is scarcely less impressive. It was here that was signed the famous Statute of Vinodol in 1266, a most remarkable document for its time, which for many years served as the charter of liberty for the semi-independent district of the Wine Valley, which stretched up into Istria.

Crikvenica, on the other hand, though tracing its origin to a Greek colony, has an air of modernity, given it by two great modern hotels. Indeed, it is one of the most fashionable resorts on the whole coast. But it was still too early for bathing, so, despite a most pressing invitation, I did not stop.

Senj, however, is far the most interesting of these little places. It is famous both for its stormy weather and its stormy history. There is nearly always a slight swell in the open roadstead, even on the calmest days, while directly opposite, between the islands of Krk and Prvić, is the notorious Gates of Senj, the Senjska Vrata. Many of the spirited drawings in the Trsat church commemorated successful navigations of these troublous waters.

Once it was a walled and independent city, the home of the Uskoks, desperate refugees from the Neretva valley, who refused to surrender to the Turks, and made a last stand for freedom in rocky Senj. And very successfully they managed it. For many years Senj was an independent state, even having its own emissaries in the Western courts of Europe, especially Spain. The fame of its greatest leader, Ivo of Senj, was not restricted to

his city. He fought at Lepanto in 1571, in Cyprus, in Egypt, and in the Morea, and at the great battle of the Kupa in Bosnia in 1593 is said to have performed the almost incredible feat of routing fifty thousand Turks with only eight hundred of his ferocious Uskoks!

His exploits have doubtless been exaggerated by the popular poets, the odds growing greater with each generation. But undoubtedly he was a mighty warrior, and the story of his death is one of the most beautiful of the Yugoslav heroic ballads.

A dream has dreamt the mother of Ivo.  
Darkness she saw fall upon Senj,  
The clear heavens burst asunder,  
The shimmering moon fell down to earth,  
On the church of St. Rose in the midst of Senj.

And the stars were swept across the sky,  
And the dawn rose up all red with blood,  
And the cuckoo bird she heard a-calling,  
In the midst of Senj, on Senj's white church.

When from her dream the dame awakened,  
Her staff she took in her right hand,  
And went forthwith to St. Rose's church;  
And there she told the Archpriest Nedeljko,  
Told him all that she had dreamed.

And when the old man had heard her out,  
'Twas thus he did expound the dream:

Hear me, O hear me, aged mother!  
'Twas an evil dream, and worse shall befall.  
That darkness fell on the town of Senj,  
Is that desolate it shall remain.  
That the clear heavens burst asunder  
And the shimmering moon fell down to earth,  
It is that Ivo is to die.

That the stars were swept across the sky,  
It is that many a widow shall be.  
That the dawn rose up all red with blood,  
It is that thou shalt be left to weep:  
That the cuckoo bird by St. Rose sang,  
It is that the Turks shall plunder it,  
And me in my old age they shall slay.

*(From trans. Prof. Seton-Watson.)*

Later, Senj was under Austrian military government, which destroyed the trade of the city and depraved its inhabitants. The Abbé Fortis, writing in 1787, says of Senj: 'The military government of Lika always opposes the commercial views of Segna, and even distresses it in many respects.' Yet he still finds traces of the old nobility of spirit. 'It is now but thinly peopled, the number of inhabitants not amounting to seven thousand; yet, notwithstanding this, and all other disadvantages, the people have a politeness of manner that is not to be met with in any other place of the Austrian coast, not even among the Venetian subjects of those parts.' Later neglect further reduced the city to about four thousand, which it numbered at the liberation in 1918, and now that the new railway line runs straight through the Lika to Split, it is not likely to recover its prosperity.

The huge machicolated castle watching over the harbour is the famous Nehaj (Fear-not).

Old Fortis is a good guide, with a sarcastic turn of phrase that is very readable. He saw Dalmatia at its very worst, and does not hesitate to lay about him, manfully, whether at Venetian neglect, Austrian militarism, or local sloth. Although himself a priest, he does not spare his own order, when, as so often at that time, it was idle and vicious. Although an Italian, he has a good understanding of, and sympathy with, the Croats and 'Morlacchi' as he calls them. He is a first-class observer in all forms of natural history, a practical man who would to-day be called an economist and a fine antiquarian.

But he does not suffer fools gladly. 'For those who are ignorant, or know little of this science (natural history), are commonly the most severe and illiberal in their accusations.' Alas, that it is only too true of himself when he deals with Slav etymologies, where he makes some of the most startling howlers!

From Senj, we passed through the formidable Senjska Vrata to Krk. The island is full of violent contrasts, a regular Dalmatia in miniature. On the side facing the Velebit, it is rough and craggy, with a fringe of forest, rare in Dalmatia. On the western side, it is terraced karst, sloping down to beautiful bathing beaches in sheltered bays. It has, too, a distinct character of its own, different from that of the other islands. Perhaps this is due to its history; for four hundred years it was the principal seat of the Frankopans, who were probably local Slav nobles in origin. The derivation from the ancient Roman patrician family of Frangipani, one of the last of the senatorial families, the gens Anicius, was probably due to a typical piece of medieval flattery on the part of Pope Martin V, whom Nikola Frankopan visited in Rome in 1426. The wily pope wished to have the support of such powerful princes, and led them to believe that they were of ancient Roman origin. The adoption of the Frangipani arms, two golden lions breaking bread, *frangens panem*, a memory of the great flood in Rome in 717, only dates from the fifteenth century. Before that time the princes of Krk used the coat of arms of the island, gold stars on a white ground. The first Venetian governor of the island, and incidentally its first historian, Antonio Vinciguerra (1480), says that they were of Slav origin, and, although he was no friend of the Frankopans, there is no reason to suppose that he deliberately lied. Fortis repeats some of his bad opinions. Perhaps the name is from Franko Ban, which is a Slav title borrowed from the Avars.

Like most powerful medieval nobles, they were a

turbulent brood. The island of Krk and all the cities of the nearby mainland are full of their fortresses, their churches, and their monastery bequests. But, despite Vinciguerra, it seems that they, or at any rate the comparative freedom that they represented, were beloved of the people of Krk. The present national costume, which is now slowly dying out, a melancholy affair of heavy black cloth, is said to have been adopted in memory of the last of the Princes of Krk, who was cheated out of his inheritance by the Venetians.

I had heard the story often before, but was lucky enough while in Baška to get the words of a folk-song which the peasants still sing, and which commemorates, accurately enough, the Venetian treachery. I give it in free translation, only regretting that I cannot reproduce the characteristic dialect peculiar to the island.

When the pale Venetians  
With armament of galleys  
Set sail to Omišalj,  
Came ashore a party  
To invite Prince Ivan  
To a great rejoicing.

When all were together  
Drinking the red wine,  
They bore away our Ivan  
To the Cresko More.

Then the Prince, our Ivan,  
Bitterly regarded  
How the faithless Venetian  
Had bitterly deceived him:

'O my lovely towers,  
Lovely and spacious,  
How beautifully I built you!  
And now I dare not  
Come once more to you.

'To whom shall I leave you?  
 To the skimming swallows  
 That on summer evenings  
 Fly above thy towers.  
 To me a sad memorial  
 And to the world, accusing  
 The treachery of Venice.'

Under the Frankopans the people of Krk were free peasant farmers, and under Venetian rule they were not serfs. One notices, even today, amongst them a freer and more independent manner than amongst the people of neighbouring Rab, who were more or less serfs until the liberation of 1918.

When we arrived at Baška the rain had stopped and the sea, after the welter of the Senjska Vrata, seemed calm and peaceful. Half the population were on the quay waiting for the boat. Indeed, that is one of the regular pleasures of any small Dalmatian town, and the visitors soon join the townsfolk. After all, there is a certain pleasure in watching a ship come in, and who knows what future friend or acquaintance may be among the newcomers?

I hate being hurried into any hotel before I can have a look round, so evaded the efficient porters with names on their caps, and asked an old fisherman to take my luggage into the village. But I was taken by the air of a somewhat older man who asked me pleasantly if I wanted a room. He turned out to be an official of the local municipality who kept a small hotel where, he told me, most of the commercial travellers put up on their rounds. In England that would be no recommendation. But throughout Central and Eastern Europe you cannot do better than follow the gentlemen of the road. They know by experience where the rooms are clean and cheap, the food good and abundant, and, in particular, where is the best wine. I have used this rule through most of the Balkans and have never known it to fail.



This time it succeeded admirably. The Pension Grandić was a pleasant place, where the good-humoured host and hostess made one feel at home at once. Furthermore, the cook, as I afterwards discovered in conversation, had been trained in the smartest restaurant in Belgrade, the Dva Ribara, and came to Baška every year, partly for business and partly on vacation. He knew all about the many and excellent Adriatic fish, and which were best fried, grilled, or steamed.

The traveller who does not eat fish on the Adriatic coast is like the man who orders ham and eggs in a Chinese restaurant. I have watched fat Germans struggling in the heat with indifferent wiener-schnitzels and wondered why they ever left the fatherland. For there is a rich aquarium from which to select. In the northern waters there are scampi, or Adriatic prawns, and excellent oysters for those who like them. A really skilful cook will usually manage to get from the local fishermen more exotic crustaceans, mussels, prštići or 'little fingers', datule, and other fruits of the sea. Then there are always first-class lobsters and salt-water crayfish, as well as that fearsome-looking Adriatic crab, which is bright pink with long spidery legs like a child's drawing.

As regards the real fishes, their name is legion. Nearly all of them are best grilled in oil. But here I must sound a note of warning for the eager gourmet. The Dalmatian oil is first-class, but it is unrefined, and the smell of the pressed olives still clings about it. Like Greek rezzinato, when you get a taste for it, you prefer it to its more refined relations. But if you haven't, then ask for your fish to be cooked in refined 'French' oil.

The Dalmatians are not master cooks. They have none of the subtleties. But they can choose and grill a fish to perfection. The tunny, for instance, is heavy and meatlike, best eaten cold and preserved in oil, with rakija, of which more later, as an accompaniment. The zubatac, well-named the toothy, is firm fleshed and considered a great

delicacy, though I myself prefer the cipol, which the Dalmatians unfairly neglect. The orad, with a head too big for its body, is also best grilled, while the molo is perhaps the only Adriatic fish that is better cooked or steamed. Avoid the morena; it is a mouthful of bones. But the little gaily-coloured barbone are very delicate eating. A good cook will not grill these too much, or they may become dry. Less delicate, but excellent for a quick light meal, are grilled fresh sardines. We are so used to seeing the sardine come, cooked and headless, out of a tin that I have known English visitors deny that they are the same fish. They are. And they are also excellent salted, as an hors d'œuvres.

This question of eating and drinking is very important, and I shall return to it again later on, not only for Dalmatia, but for other districts of Yugoslavia as well, for each region has its own delicacies and its own cuisine. For one thing, there is a good deal of truth in the saying: tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are. Another and more practical reason is that a disordered tummy is a most uncomfortable travelling companion. And it is even more irritating when it is not necessary. But beginners in Dalmatia must be careful about the oil.

The cook and I rapidly made friends. Every artist likes to be appreciated, and his handling of grilled scampi was a work of art. I won his heart by a successful experiment in using some of the local herbs as flavourings.

Next morning the bora had blown itself out and had taken with it the clouds and the rain. Baška looked fresh and new-washed in the clear sunlight of an early summer day. There were not many visitors. For one thing, it was still too early, and for another two of the principal hotels are Czech-owned, and Hitler's malevolent intentions were keeping the Czechs in their own country. For myself, I enjoyed Baška the more, but I sympathized with the islanders who look to tourists for the jam, if

not the bread and butter, of their lives. So I wandered about Baška almost alone.

It is a charming little place, less neat and tidy than other Dalmatian towns, and with few traces of its long history. The earliest inscription I found was 1525, on a house of the extraordinarily prolific Desantić family. Finally I decided to walk up to the church of Sokola and the village on the hill above Baška, whence there must be a magnificent view over the town and the sea.

With the customary pig-headedness of the explorer, however, I omitted to ask the way, and soon found myself stumbling uphill through a wilderness of slaty, sharp-edged stones and wild honeysuckles. The walls of the village and the tower of the church never seemed to come any nearer. I felt like Parsifal mounting painfully to Montsalvat. Certainly I had been a pure fool to attempt this route, and I would have given the Holy Grail itself for a jugful of cold wine.

When I got eventually to the wall of the churchyard and stumbled over it, I realized exactly how big a fool I had been. It was the cemetery church of Baška, shuttered and closed save on funeral occasions, while what I had taken to be a village was merely a few larger tombs and the remains of ancient Corinth, deserted some time in the dark ages of the barbarian invasions.

It was a city of the dead. But at least it was cool and pleasant and wind-swept. I could not help thinking that later, when the summer heats begin, the dead would fare better than the living. I was also somewhat annoyed when I saw a perfectly good path leading up from the village.

Nevertheless, here I was. Even if there was no jugful of cold wine, the air was almost as good, and the view was really magnificent. So I wandered around, looking at the inscriptions, the only living creature save a few lizards in that place of mystery and imagination. All the names were Slav, mostly already familiar to me from the little shops and villas of the town. Not more than a couple

of dozen family names in all were repeated generation after generation. At the edge of the cemetery, where the carefully gathered earth was hemmed in by a solid stone wall, was the inscription:

Here lie the bones of those who passed away long ago and now wait in darkness till judgement day awake them.

There is something magnificent in that epitaph.

But the jug of wine was still a temptation, so I walked down the excellent path to the town and got it from Mrs. Grandić. I told her of my visit to the church, and she remarked:

‘Yes, we give our dead the best place on the island.’

When I want to find out about a Dalmatian town, I ask for the local archaeologist, even as in a village inland the best person to talk to is the doctor. There nearly always is at least one person, in even the smallest places, who takes an intellectual interest in the past, and, generally speaking, they are far from being dry-as-dust bookworms. They are usually, on the other hand, energetic and enterprising, as their hobby takes them far afield among the villages and to long-deserted sites on sea or mountainside. Even those who might become bookworms by temperament have usually to ransack the libraries of monasteries so distant that they have escaped pirate raids or more civilized pillage, in order to find the books they want.

This time I approached my subject by asking if there was any one in the town who could read the old glagolitic books, and was at once sent to the parish priest, Dom Vinko Premuda.

Dom Vinko was an enthusiast. I could see that he was rather intrigued at discovering an Englishman who knew anything about glagolitic, and he dug out for me manuscripts that he had found in out-of-the-way monastic libraries where they had long remained unregarded.

For the glagolitic is the step-sister of the Roman

Church. The first Slavonic apostles, Cyril and Methodius, lived before the Great Schism, and were in touch with Rome as well as with Constantinople. The Slavonic alphabet which Cyril invented and used for their church books was not, as many believe, the Cyrillic. That was devised later at Ohrid by their disciples, Kliment and Naum, and named after their master. He used the glagolitic characters. But the new Cyrillic was so much more practical and readable that glagolitic was scarcely known to the eastern Slavs, who after the schism looked to Constantinople. On the other hand, the Croats who looked to Rome never used the Cyrillic and the glagolitic lettering became more or less synonymous with the Croat Church.

For a time it flourished under the protection of the Croat kings, but the Holy See always disapproved of services in the language of the people, and later smelt heresy in the strange crabbed characters. Despite the efforts of the Croat bishops, led by Gregory of Nin, the glagolitic service was condemned by Rome, and for almost a thousand years continued to exist on sufferance in the Dalmatian islands and along the Croatian coast. The glagolitic priests were seldom highly-educated men, and naturally became venal and superstitious. But none the less a small number of glagolitic books continued to be printed, and mass continued to be said in the old Slav tongue. There was a glagolitic printing press, for example, in Senj in the sixteenth century, but Fortis says it was destroyed by the Venetians, 'nor did I meet with any person who knew there had ever been one'. There were also educational institutions of a sort in Šibenik, Čokovac, and elsewhere.

But the eighteenth century was a time of decline. Fortis says of the island of Rab: 'In past times the spiritual interest of these people was directed by Illyrian Glagolite priests, who, to say the truth, are generally very ignorant and ill qualified for their office. The

Glagolithic tongue, which is the ancient sacred Illyric, is but little understood. . . . I found a priest at Verbenico (Vrbnik on Krk) who understands, much better than his brethren in these parts, the ancient Slavonic sacred or Glagolithic language; he showed me a manuscript wrote in that character, but it had little merit. Nowadays the Glagolithic books must lie as a simple object of curiosity in the libraries, there being hardly anybody who can read them distinctly, even in the places where the service is performed in that language; and if there happens to be one who can read the character, there is absolutely none who understand the meaning.'

Today the Holy See has at last recognized the glagolithic rite, the Croat clergy are again learned and well educated, and there has been a certain revival. The position has changed much since Fortis' day. Dom Vinko and many others are really learned men, of exemplary life, and even the great Croat bishop and Yugoslav patriot, Štrosmajer, toyed with the idea of making the glagolithic service a bridge between the Western and Eastern Churches, and thus uniting the Yugoslav peoples in a religious as well as a racial sense. The Croat service might easily do this, but I cannot believe that there is much future for the glagolithic script. It is incredibly difficult and still quite incomprehensible to all but a few. Besides, there would have to be a corresponding revision of the Church Slavonic of the Serbs.

I felt a further bond with Dom Vinko because of his cats, two ebony beauties that purred comfortably in the sun on a pile of books and manuscripts. He gently brushed one off a copy of the Kopitar edition of the Gospel of Rheims, on which the kings of France used to be crowned. It is little wonder that the French prelates of the Middle Ages considered it magic and mysterious, for half of it is in glagolithic and half in old Church Slavonic.

One of the oldest glagolithic inscriptions in the country used to be in the church of St. Lucia in the village of

Jurindvor, about two kilometres from Baška. But it was stolen during the war and taken, eventually, to Italy. At present there is a miserable concrete copy, scarcely legible. It commemorates a grant of the Croatian King Zvonimir, about 1120.

More care should be taken of these ancient Croat antiquities. Even now the situation is far from good, for their preservation is in the hands of a band of misguided enthusiasts called the Brothers of the Croatian Dragon, who uproot them and take them to Zagreb to put them in museums where no one will ever look at them. Better to leave the originals where they are, where they have a meaning, and give copies to the museums.

The peasants were evidently of the same opinion, for, on my disgusted return from Jurindvor, one of them offered to show me a fine Roman mosaic which they had discovered. But so afraid are they that this too will be taken from them, that they have carefully covered it over again with earth and only scratched up a corner to let me see a glimpse of its bright colours. Therefore I will not go into the vexed question of where the various Roman cities of the island stood, for fear of betraying their discovery.

My last evening, at supper, I saw one of the peasants who had been at the mosaic eyeing me with hesitation. I signed to him to sit down with me. He asked me, then, if I was only interested in old things. By no means. Would I join them, then, in a game of boce that evening? It was a game peculiar to the island, and they were very proud of it. He was especially impressed by the fact that the former King Edward had seen and played it, and at once ordered a set of balls to be made for him.

As a matter of fact, the game is not peculiar to Krk, as I played it later all the way down the coast as far as the Boka Kotorska. But it may well have originated here. It is played with wooden balls on a flat course like a bowling alley, and is very simple, merely consisting of

who can get nearest to a given ball and at the same time remove his adversaries'. But it can lead to great excitement, and requires a good deal of skill. Between the boce, the wine, and the presence of a foreign competitor, the company became wildly excited. Again the session lasted until late, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that I managed to rise at 5.30 to catch the boat for Rab.

This is getting into a habit!



### III

#### LOVE AND LOBSTERS: RAB

‘THE appearance of the island is exceedingly pleasant, nor do I know another in Dalmatia that, in this respect, can be compared to it.’ So wrote Fortis of Rab in 1787. I am willing to agree with him in 1938.

In summer in Dalmatia the early mornings are fresh and cool. It is a pleasure rather than a hardship to get up early. If one is early enough to catch the sunrise, one is amply rewarded. So we were a merry company on board. One of my commercial companions at the Grandić was also going to Rab, and I took advantage of his local knowledge. He was of a merry and amorous disposition, and was very pleased at the chance of a few days in Rab, for the little capital is noted for its gaiety.

The first sight of Rab is delightful. After the rocky wildness of the coast, its grey-green forests of stone pines seem to welcome one. The ship stops for a moment at Lopar, the only other tourist centre of the island, where are a few small hotels and pensions and little else. Lopar has two claims to notice, both of them somewhat unusual. Firstly, it is one of the few places in Dalmatia with a nudist colony, and all the passengers who knew of the fact were on the look-out. But there was nothing to be seen from the ship, and, if there had been, I am afraid that even my amorous commercial traveller would have been disappointed. For nudist colonies usually look very different from the intriguing pictures of bronzed young men and incredibly beautiful girls that one sometimes sees in the newspapers. Usually their exponents are not among the most beautiful of their sex. As one somewhat homely maiden remarked: ‘I like nudism, because that is the only time no one looks at my face.’

It was also the birthplace of the hermit Marinus who founded the tiny republic of San Marino in Italy, which is still independent, though known to few save stamp collectors. It distinguished itself recently by arresting the Turkish ambassador to Italy, since, through an oversight of the peace treaties, it was still in a state of war with Turkey!

After a succession of beautiful wooded bays, we came in sight of Rab itself, which is one of the most beautiful cities of Dalmatia. It is a tiny walled stronghold of the Middle Ages, with typical palaces and churches, but has been given a special faery quality of its own by its four graceful campaniles, with massive spiky agaves along the sea-wall and green forests behind. It is so romantic in appearance that it has almost an air of unreality.

We threaded into the still harbour through a series of breakwaters, which seem unnecessarily elaborate in high summer, but are needed in winter to break the force of the bora. The quay was gay and crowded with townspeople and visitors. Every one seemed in holiday mood, and, indeed, the whole atmosphere of Rab is one of gaiety. The squadrons of tiny white-sailed pleasure boats along the quay, like a flock of gulls with outspread wings, added to the charm of the first impression and the long line of hotels do not spoil the medieval character of the city, but are lined up along the quay like willing and discreet servants of the old aristocrat behind them.

I do not like mondaine resorts. But Rab is an exception. For one thing, two minutes on foot or by boat takes one immediately out of the mondaine atmosphere, whither one may return again at night for as much wine, women, and song as one desires. The long quay is gay and crowded till late into the night with the most startling beach-pyjamas and the most elaborate holiday fashions. There is always a sound of music, and almost everywhere there is dancing. But round the corner of the princes' palace, or on the little square near the cathedral, and one is

back again in the quiet austerity of the Middle Ages. The contrast is striking and exhilarating, like an *omelette surprise*.

I expected to enjoy Rab and was not disappointed. It knows exactly how far to go. For example, the prices are not much higher than in the smaller Dalmatian resorts, and they remain fixed, instead of being graduated according to one's appearance and probable nationality. The people are friendly without being obsequious. One can go freely to the sea or to the forests without being stopped at every moment by those innumerable notices of 'Private' which had so annoyed me at Abbazia. And although there are beautiful and friendly girls everywhere, there is little or none of that stuffy, hot-house atmosphere of commercialized sex. Rab is out to enjoy itself, and succeeds very well.

Incidentally, the news broadcast in 1937 by press and radio that Rab was almost destroyed by a terrible fire was quite untrue. The fire was serious and, for a time, seemed dangerous. But in the end the only damage done was that the old palace of the princes was gutted. As it was more or less empty anyway, this was of no particular importance. The fine old walls are still standing, and the only evident damage is to a Renaissance balcony which collapsed, but which can fairly easily be repaired.

I found a good and comfortable hotel, and arranged to see my traveller at the Casino the same evening. The price of seventy dinars—about six shillings—for full board was not high, considering the excellent service given. Certainly the man with full pockets can spend all he has got, and more, at Rab, but the average traveller can fare almost as well on very little. Then I wandered into the town.

It is quite small. In half an hour or so, one can see all the principal sights. But almost any of the churches and monasteries, of which there are an incredible number



RAB



for so small a place, have treasures of art and history that repay a much longer study. But few people give them that attention, for the atmosphere of Rab is one of holiday and not of history, though the history is always there, like an impalpable essence. No modern city would seem quite so gay without the contrast.

Almost every house bears either a coat-of-arms or the sign of some religious order. In the Middle Ages, the place must have been priest-ridden and, on referring to my old companion Fortis, I found that he had also remarked on this fact with his usual pungency. 'The number of people on the island does not much exceed three thousand souls, distributed in a few parishes, which might be officiated by a small number of priests. Yet, through a monstrous inconsistency that falls very heavy upon the poor inhabitants, they have to maintain no less than three convents of friars and as many of nuns, besides the considerable number of near sixty priests, who have a very scanty provision.'

Incidentally also, Rab was the only place where I did not find an intelligent archaeologist. The parish priest confessed that he knew little of the history of his parish, but he showed me the head of St. Christopher, the patron of the island. An early bishop of Rab was rash enough to doubt the authenticity of this relic, and refused to allow it to be carried in procession, which so enraged the people of the town that they threatened to throw him into the sea from the square in front of the cathedral. The fall is considerable. So the head was carried in procession and the bishop obtained a transfer to Italy. The still more miraculous heads of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, mentioned by Fortis, are no longer to be seen.

As befits a place of women and song, the wine of Rab is excellent. Real wine lovers will find it best in the villages, but in the town itself it is still good. I found my friend in the Casino with the local chemist, a cynical old man who

had administered to a good many generations of human weaknesses. I think all the tongues of Europe were to be heard in the Casino; German, this season, the most prevalent. But it added flavour to the dancing, which was gay but decorous. Only about three in the morning, I noticed a German girl who was more drunk than any woman I have ever seen in a public place. As Boccaccio puts it discreetly, she was much more full of wine than modesty. But by that time the dancing had ceased, and the orchestra were drinking prošek at our table and playing Yugoslav Russian, and Hungarian folk-songs to the old chemist, and no one worried much about Miss Bacchus and her cavaliers.

It is customary to regard Rab as a Venetian city, and certainly some of the finest buildings date from the Venetian occupation. But the general aspect of the town was already formed before their time. An old picture of the city in the monastery of St. Antun, with the Virgin and Christ with some saint, probably St. Antun, looking down at it benevolently from cotton-wool clouds of glory, shows it very much as it is today. The long quay with its row of hotels is new, and a fourth campanile has been added since that time, but the other changes are insignificant. Rab was an Illyrian stronghold, the centre of the Ardeian tribe, later a Roman city, then in turn Gothic, Byzantine, Croat, and Croato-Hungarian. The head of St. Christopher, according to legend, alone saved it from a Norman conquest in 1075. It had its own bishopric from 530 to 1823, and its own statutes and semi-autonomous constitution from the tenth century till after the Venetian conquest. The cathedral church was commenced in the twelfth century, and its campanile is first mentioned in 1212. The Lion of St. Mark, here as in many other places in Dalmatia, merely reaped where others had sown.

One of the great charms of Rab is that one can go almost everywhere by sailing boat, and many of the

pleasant bays have discreet little restaurants, where one can get good fish and better wine. Perhaps the best Dalmatian prošek comes from Rab. It is a sweet, heavy wine, very heady, and really only suitable for dessert, but the visitors to Rab often drink it as a table wine with disastrous results, as its strength is concealed by its sweetness.

I took many such excursions. Indeed, when I was in Rab, I behaved as a good tourist should. I felt lazy about historical investigations, and therefore must refer you to others, preferably Jackson, for the full history of the heretic archbishop of Rab, de Dominis, who meditated upon the laws of optics and gravitation while at mass, and in many ways foretold the discoveries of Newton, who questioned the power and integrity of the Roman Church and fled to King James, who gave him an English living, where he wrote a book against Rome; but who at last recanted and was received again into the bosom of Mother Church, only to have his uneasy body exhumed after death and publicly burnt on the Campo Santo. The family still exists in Yugoslavia and in America. I know one of them, and he is just such another uneasy spirit, whom one is in doubt whether to dub genius or charlatan. I gazed indifferently upon the probable Titian in the church of Sv. Andrija and the famous Vivarini polyptich in the cathedral, now alas only in copy. The original was bought by a rich American in 1876 and taken to Boston. The ancient shields, the wonderful carved portals of the Bakota and Marčić-Galzigna palaces, the graceful campaniles, and the grey old bastions faded and blurred into an impression of white sails, sunlight, and smiling faces.

Mostly sunlight, that is; for one excursion of mine ended in tragi-comedy. May is early for Rab, and the weather had not yet set fair. Therefore I was to blame when I invited a pretty young German acquaintance—I have said that Rab is a friendly place—to go with me



to Barbat, famous for its wine and lobsters, but a good two-hours' sail from the city.

We set out on a shining afternoon, with a slight sea running outside the breakwaters and enough wind to send us merrily along the barren rocky shores of Dolin, where, in contrast with the greenness of Rab, there seemed no sign of life.

Barbat itself is a little fishing village, with a tiny harbour for fishing vessels, and picturesque festoons of drying nets. Nearby are ruins, probably of a Greek settlement and the church of the monastery of St. Damian of the fifteenth century, though the site may be older, as Damian was a Byzantine rather than a Western favourite. Otherwise there is nothing of any great age, and the present reputation of Barbat rests upon those same wines and lobsters. Pretty Poldi was more interested in these than in monasteries, so we found a table in the courtyard of the inn and then looked at the lobsters, which were pulled out of the sea in wicker fish-traps for our inspection.

The inn was charming, with wild fuchsia growing everywhere. Probably the seeds came from some patrician garden, for I have not seen it elsewhere. Then we settled down to discussing wine with our host. He had his own vineyards and made his own wine. But, unlike many peasant proprietors, he knew very well how to make it, and we finally decided on a bottle of heavy black prošek, which he insisted on calling Malaga. It was far too heavy a wine for supper, especially with lobsters, but my companion liked it, and my stomach can stand almost anything under compulsion.

There was another group of tourists at the inn, fat and smiling Saxons, who ate continually till one wondered where they stowed it all. In another mood I would have cursed them to high heaven as barbarians, but the wine made us tolerant, and we only laughed at their horror when we left half of our lobster uneaten. Madame Saxon almost wept at such waste, and only a lingering sense of

shame prevented her from packing the bits into a handkerchief and taking it with her when she left. We merely ordered more wine.

It was the second bottle that undid us—or perhaps it was the third! The wind, which had seemed so pleasant during the afternoon, had by now risen to a gale, whipping the sea into a fury of white waves. It grew decidedly cold, and we took shelter inside the inn, whither came Sava, our boatman, with a broad grin on his face and the ominous query:

‘I hope you brought overcoats? There will be a fortuna-ta tonight.’

We hadn’t, of course. Who ever thinks of an overcoat on Rab? I looked out to look at the weather and found it raining vigorously. Poldi was drowsing in a corner; I leant over and stroked her, half expecting her to purr, but she only smiled sleepily. Then I made up my mind and sent for Sava. I, for one, was not going back in that wind and rain, and it took very little to convince Poldi also of the foolishness of such a course, though for a time she fought me with the weapons of propriety.

But in the end I cut all arguments short by sending Sava out to look for rooms, armed with an enormous umbrella that might have sheltered a regiment, and was, in fact, intended to shelter an entire table.

A little later he came back, stumbling through the dark and rain. He had found rooms in a fisherman’s cottage, and we all huddled together under the tremendous umbrella and splashed our way through the darkness. But the rooms themselves were clean, with well-scrubbed wooden floors, and peasant beds and coverlets that spoke of ceaseless toil and loving care. Save for the fact that every time we opened a door or window the lamps would blow out, we were very comfortable. And about midnight the chiming of the crickets and the hoarse gabble of the frogs told us that the storm was nearly over. A little later and we could hear cries and the creaking of ropes

and dories, and knew that the Barbat fishing fleet was putting out for a delayed night's toil.

In the freshness of the early morning, with a brisk breeze and under a warm sun, we returned to Rab, tired but happy.

## IV

### THE FJORD OF THE GIANTS: ZRMANJA

NEXT day I left Rab. I was sorry to go, and my sentimental duties kept me long at the rail. But there is only one boat a week to Obrovac, and Obrovac I had determined to see.

This trip is one of the most magnificent in all Dalmatia. But few tourists know it, and even the average Yugoslav shakes his head and murmurs something vague about there being a lake and a canyon. Few have ever been there.

So the company on the boat was small, and, for the most part, strictly businesslike. Besides myself, there was my amorous commercial traveller, who wailed openly for the delights of Rab, some peasants going to out-of-the-way villages, and a squad of gendarmes. Oh yes; and the lobster-eating Saxons. More honour to them!

The boat headed back towards the mainland across the Mountain Channel. The first stop was Jablanac, described by Fortis as a 'miserable hamlet', but now a pleasant little seaside resort, making a gay patch of colour against the massive grey stone of the Velebit. Its harbour is also in a fine rocky fjord, and is a favourite excursion from Rab, but compared with the Obrovac canyon it is a second-rate affair.

It is from the districts around Jablanac that the Bunjevci come; or at least that is the most probable of the many suggestions for their origin, and eighteenth-century writers take it for granted. These Bunjevci now form a curious little racial and religious pocket far up in the northern plain, around Subotica on the Hungarian frontier. There we shall meet them again, but a digression on their history would take us too far from Dalmatia.

For the next hour or so the journey was not particularly interesting. Maybe this is one of the reasons why it is not popular with tourists. The ship slowly steams down the long channel, with the stony slopes of Velebit on the one side and the low, rather featureless, shores of Pag on the other. Sometimes the monotony was varied by a short halt at one or other of the villages which seem to perch precariously on the very narrow shelf between the Velebit and the sea. It looks as if a push would send them all sliding into the water, and one wonders how people live in that treeless, vineless, and waterless solitude. At one time it must have been still worse, for it was only last year that the magnificent road which runs all along the coast from Sušak to Ulcinj was completed, which on its way passes through these villages and gives them a hope of communication with the outer world. The boats call regularly, but infrequently.

Generally speaking, it is best to see Dalmatia by boat, when one can visit the islands and peer into the fjords. But here it is far better by car. The view from the road over the sea is magnificent; that from the sea over the mountains impressive but monotonous.

A trio of dolphins followed us down the canal, rising and dipping gracefully and rhythmically, and easily outstripping the boat when they had a mind to do so. At first, every one watched them, but they soon became too familiar. The commercial traveller wanted the police sergeant to shoot one, heaven only knows why. But the sergeant merely remarked:

‘What for? Perhaps they, too, want to live.’

They certainly looked as if they did as they danced gay acrobatics in the water.

It was at one of the smallest and most desolate of these halting places, Lukovo, that we decanted our gendarmes. It consisted of three houses and a church, set in barren karst. We saw the poor devils toiling up the treeless hillside, in full equipment, under a broiling sun, bound

for some unruly township in the Lika. For the people of the Lika have always been unruly, and still are. Their stony wilderness makes them hard, and their whole history has been one of fighting.

A good many of them are descendants of the Uskoks, and their government under Austria was not calculated to make them soft. The Austrian commandant used to live at Karlobag, our next stop, in wild and barren surroundings, but none the less a pleasant little place to rest and bathe for a few days. In fact, another oasis in the Velebit. Fortis gives it a bad character: 'It became one of the strong places of the Uscocchi, and was in 1616 burnt, and demolished from the foundations, by the Venetians, who did not care to keep possession of that horrid country to which nature has denied even water to drink.' He goes on to describe the city as rebuilt under the Austrians, and the comparatively thriving trade that it might have had with the hinterland had it not been for the ferocious military government. For one of the main Velebit passes is here.

'The country of Lika was once in much better circumstances than it is at present (1787); the passage from the Ottoman to the Austrian yoke, brought along with it a change of constitution which reduced the inhabitants to the most miserable condition. They have lost, without any exception, the right of property or land; that is distributed among the soldiers, and on the death of a soldier his respective portion returns to the sovereign. If he happens to leave a family, a mother, a widow, children, all these wretched victims are obliged to leave their habitation and to beg their bread elsewhere. The shepherds, . . . are equally wretched . . . for the most part their cattle are taken, and paid for in the military way, that is to say, for the half of what they are worth. The cane is made use of on those wretches for the most trifling causes, and as they know it, they often fly into the Turkish territory, where they are less cruelly treated.

At Carlobago I have seen such instances of inhumanity as are too shocking to be related.'

No wonder their descendants are tough! And yet there are still sentimentalists, especially among the English, who regret the passing of the old Empire! Certainly the system of the military frontiers did not exist into the past age; but the relation of German and Slav went on in much the same manner till the Slavs were strong enough to put a stop to it themselves.

Bela IV of Hungary is supposed to have taken refuge in Karlobag, when flying before the Tatars in 1241. Myself, I doubt it. If so, he must have slept in as many beds as Queen Elizabeth, for the same honour is claimed by some half-dozen other cities up and down the coast. Most probably it belongs to Klis, whence he afterwards retired to Trogir, which was then under the rule of the Šubić family.

On the island of Pag, to port, there was little to be seen, for the city of Pag is on a salt lagoon with a narrow entrance towards the main channel. I believe it is an interesting little place. It is certainly ancient, and still possesses some fine fourteenth-century architecture, but our boat did not stop, and the outer shores of the island are uninviting. In the Middle Ages the lagoon had some reputation as a salt-pan.

The main hill of this island is named after St. Vid, and, indeed, in the purely Slavonic districts, by which I mean those where the Venetian clergy had little or no influence, you will come upon a strange collection of local saints. Some of them are the descendants of Slavonic gods, whom the wily missionaries converted, willy-nilly, into respectable Christians. One of these is Vid, whose name keeps appearing in the most unlikely places, not only in Catholic Yugoslavia but also in the Orthodox districts. Some of the older folk-songs even keep his name in the purely pagan form of Svetovid, and an enthusiastic painter of Belgrade even tried—unsuccessfully—to revive his



PEASANTS FROM THE LIKA





pagan cult. His saint's day, Vidovdan, is very famous in Yugoslav history, for it was then that the Turks destroyed the last powerful coalition of Serb and Bosnian princes under Lazar on the field of Kosovo in 1389. Although independent states continued to exist for another seventy years or more after Kosovo, they were no longer powerful and history and legend alike regard Kosovo as the downfall of the Balkan Slavs. It was also the date of the promulgation of the recent Yugoslav constitution, which is not over popular among the Croats.

The attributes of another Slavonic god, Perun, were taken over, lock, stock, and barrel, by St. Elias the Thunderer. Only Lel, the God of Love, appears to have no official Christian successor.

The journey then becomes more interesting, the halts more frequent, and the scenery more impressive. We stopped at Ražanac, which, from the sea, seems little more than a collection of cottages around a medieval castle. The quay, as usual, was crowded, and a mass of small boys shouted to us to throw dinars into the water, eager to show their skill in swimming and diving.

The people here looked very poor, although the district is less barren than that through which we had passed. I asked the captain the reason. It was simple. Here kmetstvo, a form of serfdom, is still in force, for much of the land still belongs to the citizens of Zara, which is an Italian enclave, and the agrarian reform has been delayed because of international complications. The matter is now, I believe, being settled, but it will take some time for the district to get on its feet, for the first reaction of peasants to freedom from feudal restrictions is a feeling of helplessness in face of a world suddenly become far more complicated than any they have known. As a rule, it is only the second generation that makes progress.

Incidentally, this region appears at first to be overpoliced. That again is the fault of Zara, for a good deal of smuggling goes on across the frontier.

## NOTE

### ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF YUGOSLAV NAMES

**I**N this book I have made no attempt to anglicize Yugoslav proper names, with the exception of Belgrade (Serbo-Croat: Beograd) and Yugoslavia (Serbo-Croat: Jugoslavija), which would seem absurd to an English reader in their proper form.

Otherwise I have used the Latin Croatian spelling throughout. Slovene has the same phonetics and the same alphabet, Serb the same phonetics but the Cyrillic alphabet.

Serb and Croat are practically the same, with slight dialect differences, with which it is unnecessary to worry the average reader. Slovene is different, but with similar orthography, so that no one need anticipate any difficulties. All the South Slav dialects are mutually comprehensible, including Bulgarian, though in the case of Slovene a certain amount of oral practice is advisable. Speaking Serbo-Croat reasonably well, I can travel easily and make myself everywhere understood from Mt. Triglav to the Black Sea. Most educated persons in Croatia and Slovenia speak German and French, in Dalmatia, German, Italian, and often English, in Serbia and South Serbia, French. In all large towns there is a group of English-speaking persons, usually with a club.

Serbo-Croat is strictly phonetic. One sound is almost designated by one character; in the Cyrillic alphabet always. The foreigner cannot go far wrong if he uses 'continental' vowels and English consonants, with the following exceptions:

*c* is always *ts*, as in cats. Example: Car—Tsar. "ica" is common geographical ending, e.g. Planica—Planitsa, or Crikvenica—Tsrikvenitsa.

fantastically twisted olives and mathematical vines, while on the farther side the ancient fortress and city of Novigrad itself shows that the ages passed and man was at last created. Another equally narrow and winding channel leads into the Sea of Karin.

The former King Edward came here in his yacht, the *Nahlin*, and his visit has ever since been a passport of friendship for all Englishmen who penetrate so far.

After leaving Novigrad, we did not continue to the Sea of Karin. In any case, it is too shallow for large ships. Instead, we steamed across the Novigradsko More to a narrow cleft in the mountains, as dark and forbidding as that down which the luckless Persephone was haled. It was even more astounding that the gorges of the Danube, because wilder and more forbidding. I wonder if Dante was ever in Dalmatia? Some of the landscape has a decidedly infernal flavour.

Here the river Zrmanja enters the Novigradsko More. For almost an hour the ship moves slowly on between enormous walls of rock, so high that if one stands under the awning one cannot see the sky, but must crane outwards to look up. I wish I were a geologist. Those rock walls must have a story to tell. But what it is, I do not know. There is no road, no house, no sign of life; only a ruined watch-tower where, the captain said, the Turks used to put political prisoners, and a lonely fishermen's shrine to St. Nikola. They would scarcely need a guard.

At first the only variation in the landscape was an occasional giant landfall of loose scree, another unread chapter in the geological story. Now and again the turns are so abrupt that an unskilful captain may have to back and fill like a motor on a hair-pin bend. Then for a moment one would catch a glimpse of the summits of the Velebit, some of them still white with snow. The whole scene had a Himalayan grandeur.

Later, it was a little more human than the Novigrad

canal. There were gulls on the surface of the water and in the distance, on top of the rock walls, an occasional goat. Once, rounding a bend, we came upon some fishermen who rapidly drew their boat in to a fall of scree to escape our wash. If they stove it in there, it might be days before they were discovered. The sound of our engine echoed and re-echoed about the rock walls like distant giants cheering.

As we neared Obrovac itself, the river became a little less formidable. Once, high up on the rock wall, we caught a glimpse of the new motor-road, and at the foot of the cliffs dense clusters of weeds and bullrushes began to appear, that bowed mockingly to us in perfect drill order as our wash passed through them. But still there were no trees. Only when we were quite near the town itself did we see a few funereal cypresses guarding the cemetery, to which all corpses must be taken by boat. It must be a solemn sight to see the boats filled with mourners and chanting priests making their slow way down this devil's canal.

This cemetery is a rare example of religious tolerance; or perhaps it is only so by necessity. For the people of this district, the Ravni Kotari, are Orthodox, whereas the coast people are Catholic. Obrovac itself is mixed. A narrow pass divided the cemetery; to one side lie the Orthodox in the shadow of the Greek cross, which has a smaller cross-piece at the top to mark the superscription over the head of Jesus; to the other lie the Catholics, under the plain cross that we all know well.

Obrovac itself is a striking place at first sight. The canyon does not end, but simply widens out enough to allow a few fields to exist by the water's edge and three roads to converge on the little hill in the centre of the ravine, upon which the city is built. Needless to say, that hill is crowned by a fortress; this time Turkish. From it there is a magnificent view up and down the canyon of the Zrmanja.

It is also a pleasant place. The landing-stage is planted with old trees; a grateful sight to eyes wearied of stone. The girls, too, are exceptionally pretty, and most people here wear the national dress, which is rarely to be seen now on the coast. We had plenty of time to observe both, for our captain insisted on turning round before drawing in to the stage, and the performance took a considerable time, bow and stern alternatively and literally touching the banks.

It was market day when we arrived. The streets were full of peasants in the picturesque national costume of the Lika, with its highly embroidered waistcoat and cocky little tasselled cap. They are a tough lot, these Ličani, but they have plenty of sense of humour, and a good many jokes were passing to and fro among the chafferers. I spotted an uncommonly pretty girl and wanted to photograph her, but insisted on finding a good-looking young man in national costume to stand with her. The old women selling vegetables joined in with a will, calling up all the old crocks they could find, one after another. Finally, I saw a handsome young peasant and got him to stand with her, after which the jokes flowed faster than ever, as he did not know the girl. For the rest of my short stay in Obrovac the market called me the 'marriage-broker'.

Still more amusement was caused when five athletic young piglets broke loose and half the market joined in the chase. My quarry fled into the church, where I cornered it, and the old women did not know whether to laugh or to be horrified at possible sacrilege. Finally they laughed and went on laughing for an hour or more.

Nearly all these peasants are Orthodox, who take their religion lightly. They are far less bigoted than the Catholics. But they identify their religion with their race, so one may not go too far. Nevertheless, some of their best tales are at the expense of the 'popes', as the Orthodox priests are called.

One typical peasant yarn describes a party of thieves rifling a church. One of them climbs on to the altar to pull down a gold-inlaid ikon. The others gaze on him, horror-struck:

'Take your shoes off! Don't you know that's sacrilege?'

There was more trouble later about pigs. The captain of our ship had bought one in the market. But when the ship was due to sail, the pig was missing. He swore it had been stolen, but I already knew those athletic porkers. Probably it had escaped and run off by itself. He complained to the station sergeant, who began to investigate. At the suggestion of theft, the situation grew awkward, and some of the peasants drew knives. The peace was saved by the piglet himself, who appeared unexpectedly in the police station!

Obrovac was once an important trading centre. But it has lost much recently through poor communications and the fact that Zara, its chief market, is Italian. But it will probably recover, now that the new motor-road has been built. However, it has poor accommodation. The Saxons, who were returning to Rab, slept on the boat, but I decided to follow the commercial traveller overland and see something of the little known district of the Ravni Kotari. So we toiled up darksome stairs to the poky rooms of the local inn. But at least they were clean, and we slept well.

Before our bus left next morning, my companion had some business to settle. I accompanied him to his first call. Never have I seen such a shop; it was the true prototype of a 'general store'. Glancing around I could see mouse-traps, candles, cloth, cheese-graters, lard, beans, thread, fishing-nets, and endless nameless things hanging from the ceiling.

The motor-bus to Benkovac had broken down. But that was a blessing in disguise for the mail had to go, and there were two places available in the private car that had



LIKA PEASANTS AT OBROVAC





to take it. We started out from Obrovac therefore in luxury, along the road built by Napoleon's marshals in 1809. The French only held Dalmatia for a very short while, but they did more to assist the province than the Austrians in a hundred years. Even old Franz Joseph admitted the fact, for, on a visit to Split, he remarked: 'A pity that the French were such a short time here.'

We climbed out of the gorge to a high plateau and then again down a steep hillside, to where the Sea of Karin glittered like a jewel at the end of the sterile wilderness of stone. The back of the car was piled high with loaves of bread, which we handed out to solitary housewives at the gates of lonely farms. Sometimes in winter, when the snow is thick, these people do not see bread for a week or ten days. So stony is the land that even the vines are supported by large pieces of stone in place of sticks.

Karin was truly beautiful. A tiny stream and a fertile patch of trees and vines made it appear an oasis in the stony desert. The still and landlocked sea was the most gorgeous blue. But it was so poor that there was not even a kafana. Perhaps, though, we saw it at its best, for it was a great feast-day, Spasovdan, and all the girls were in their most splendid national dresses, with all their dowries upon them in the form of gold pieces. I often stopped the car for a chat and a photo, till the chauffeur grew angry and told me I was delaying the mails.

Benkovac, on the other hand, was not beautiful. I had intended to spend the night there and go on with my friend to Zemunik and Nin. But he had work to do and I hadn't. The long dusty main street of Benkovac had neither character nor charm. It was merely hot, dirty, and unpleasant. I went to look at the old Turkish fortress, but that, too, has little character, and I could not spend all day watching the antics of the lizards. Then I tried to get into the church of St. Ante. It was shut, but I routed out a talkative old woman who was supposed to be the caretaker. She was friendly, but not helpful.

'It is only open once a year, and the priest has the key. See how he keeps it! It's like a pig-stye. It's a scandal!'

She was right; it was.

Then I routed out another priest, an Orthodox pope with an uncommonly pretty wife. Both were hospitable, but one cannot drink rakija all day in such heat. Besides, I wanted to find out something of the history of Benkovac—for it was a frontier fortress and has history—but no one either knew or cared.

It is one of the dullest places I have ever seen in Yugoslavia. How the officers of the garrison stationed here can keep sane is more than I can tell. There does not even seem to be a sufficient supply of pretty girls, and six months or so of nothing but drink and cards would send any civilized man crazy. Four hours were enough for me. To the dismay of my commercial friend, I found a bus that was to leave for Knin in ten minutes, and hailed a porter to carry my luggage. He was the one distinguishing feature of Benkovac. He had the largest feet I have ever seen.

Once in the bus, a good deal of my ill-humour vanished. The countryside around Benkovac is far more interesting than the town itself. The valley was comparatively fertile, the little stone houses had each its round stone threshing-floor, since they had now something to thresh, and the hedgerows were gay with wild roses. Away to the left was the castle of Perušić, which was once Šubić, and afterwards belonged to a family I cannot trace, with the title of Counts of Possedaria. It is very well preserved, and lies on a wind-swept plateau, like a castle of chivalrous romance.

Our bus conductor was a small boy, whose duty it was to collect the fares and to collect and deliver the mail at each post-office. In the intervals he sat hunched up in the front of the bus, reading the Yugoslav equivalent of a 'penny-blood'. I think it was called *The Pirate of Dubrovnik*. Obviously he was living vicariously in stirring

times. Unfortunately, however, for him a large bee entered the open windscreen and, after trying vainly to fly through a glass pane, fell neatly down the back of his neck. He must have thought the Dubrovnik pirate had attacked him in person, for he gave a terrific jump and nearly overturned the bus by blundering against the chauffeur in his efforts to tear his shirt off.

This valley presents a different face to every visitor. At this time, in early summer, it was green and welcoming, though the grim background of stone was always waiting. In late summer it is burnt brown; in winter it is wilderness.

But I had had enough of stone for the present, and decided to go on to Knin, where I could get a train to the sea again at Šibenik.

We stopped for half an hour at Kištanje, which was not so very different from Benkovac, but somehow produced a much more pleasant impression. The houses seemed neater, the people pleasanter. Later, I met several men from Kištanje and liked them all; I have still to meet a pleasant Benkovčanin.

From Kištanje the road leads once more through karst country, with enormous piles of stone in the middle of the fields, looking at a distance like kaffir huts. But at or near the village of Radučić, at a place called the Crooked Stones, rise out of this sea of rock two large and very beautiful Roman arches. They seem to stand quite separate, and there seem to be no other traces of antiquity around. Fortis saw and drew them; there were three in his time, and he mentions that a little before then there were five. He thinks they were the ruins of Burnum, the earlier Liburna of Strabo. But I cannot think the Romans would have built a city here, when a few kilometres away there is the living water of the Krka. To my mind, the Crooked Stones are the remains of some memorial.

Knin is also a very ancient town, possibly the Arduba of the Illyrian wars. It, too, is built on a hill encircled by a

bend of the Krka, and crowned, as usual, by a fortress, a larger one than usual, and in good preservation, which now houses a fine collection of medieval arms and armour. But I did not stay. Already I wanted to see the sea again, and took the first train to Šibenik.

## V

### CRUISERS AND CATHEDRALS: ŠIBENIK

THE situation of Šibenik is one of the most beautiful in Dalmatia. But it is best approached from the sea. From Zara southwards there is a maze of islands. I do not know how many; such an investigation would be as useless and futile as Psyche's task. About fifteen of them are of any size or importance. The others are countless.

The city itself lies on an arm of the sea that is really the estuary of the river Krka. The narrow entrance is guarded by the beautiful old Venetian fortress of St. Nikola, built in 1546 after the plans of the famous Leonardo Sammichele. It, too, is an island. But Sammichele was not only an excellent military engineer, but also something of an artist, and it is interesting to compare its beautiful lines with the stark utility of fortresses like Knin or Klis. There are a good many modern coast-defences, too, for Šibenik is an important naval base. One does not see them, for modern fortifications are retiring by nature, but one knows they are there by the many notices forbidding boats to linger or tie up in the channel. Once through these outer sentinels and Šibenik itself lies before you, on the far side of the bay, built on a hillside crowned not by one, but by three tremendous fortresses.

One gets a very good idea of the city from the sea, whence one can discern its many good and bad points. For I am not going to praise Šibenik unreservedly. To the right is the modern and efficient naval station of Madalina, usually with three or four destroyers or mine-layers at anchor; right upper entrance, to use stage terms, is the busy commercial port, for Šibenik is one of the most important export centres of Bosnia and the

Lika, having good railway communication. Usually the quays are piled high with Bosnian timber, bauxite, and raw aluminium. Centre, lies the main square of the modern city with the passenger port. On the backcloth are the three fortresses, stepped on hills one above the other, rather like a stage scene. Left upper entrance is the medieval city with the famous cathedral, floodlit by night. Left lower entrance is the continuation of the river Krka, leading to Skradin.

This time, however, I came to Šibenik by rail, which is not the best way. But this occasion also tallied with previous experience. I found the modern city detestable and the medieval city charming. As for the cathedral, I agree with Jackson that it is one of the most beautiful in the world.

I recommend every one to spend at least a day in Šibenik to see the cathedral. But I cannot recommend the hotels. I was in one of the best, and felt myself a stranger all the time. The people of Šibenik have not the knack of making a visitor feel at home. The hotel had a 'take it or leave it' style reminiscent of Manchester, and my impression was not improved when, on sitting in the salon the first evening, I was disturbed by four men dragging the large and blood-stained carcase of a pig through to the kitchen. There is nothing quite so dead as a dead pig, and they were followed up by an elderly and slatternly woman with a dirty cloth wiping up bloodstains. She missed some of them. A young German girl who was coming down the main staircase at the time nearly fainted. For myself, I was rather amused, but none the less went out of the hotel to join the corso.

I note that the Royal Automobile Club recommends Šibenik as the best stop for the night, before making Split the next day. I venture to correct that. Biograd-na-Moru is a far pleasanter night's rest, and the motorist may remain long enough in Šibenik next day to see the cathedral.

That is really wonderful. I went there several times.

Indeed, as the plague was not open, I spent nearly all my spare time there, skilfully avoiding the aged cicerone who was eager to tell me all the things I already knew. Once I tried him with a question or two, to which I did not know the answer, but his information was so wide of the mark that I rapidly dismissed him. Later, I found a canon of the cathedral, who was both intelligent and interesting, and really knew a great deal of the building of which he was so evidently fond.

There is a project under consideration to tear down part of the bishop's palace, which is a building of no great value, so that the cathedral may be better seen from the sea. That will be good, for although the dome rises high above the roofs, it is only possible to see the magnificent proportions from the cathedral square. They are so perfect that they make the building appear much larger than in fact it is.

For more than a hundred years the cathedral was at once the pride and the bane of the people of Šibenik. They poured out their treasures to complete it, but grumbled all the time that it would bankrupt them, which it nearly did. The foundation was laid in 1431, and the exterior was considered finished in 1536.

It is in various styles, according to the tastes of the architects who succeeded one another through the century of construction. But they are so perfectly harmonized that only the architect is aware of this; the cathedral is most definitely a unit and not a patchwork. The first architect, Francesco de Giacomo, did little save make mistakes, and was removed after ten years' work. The second, Giorgio Orsini of Zara, who was known, like all Slav artists of the time, as Schiavone, built in decorated Venetian Gothic; whereas the second great architect of the building, Niccolo the Florentine, while certainly influenced by Schiavone's plans, completed it in the Tuscan Renaissance style. Most of their assistants were local craftsmen.



I am not an historian of art, so will not describe all the treasures of the cathedral. Those who wish a detailed description will find it in Jackson's *Dalmatia, Istria, and the Quarnero*, which is still the best account of the art and architecture of Dalmatia. Let each discover new treasures for himself. There are plenty of them. I will therefore mention only the one or two things that especially fascinated me.

One of them, naturally, was the Lion Gate, which represents the entry into paradise, and is flanked by two lions who watch the gateway with amiable smiles. No sinner would give up hope in face of such guardians. Above them, in niches, are delightfully prudent statues of Adam and Eve, driven from Paradise. They are somewhat primitive, and probably were taken from an earlier cathedral. Above them, again, are Saints Peter and Paul, masterpieces of fifteenth century carving by Giorgio Orsini himself. On each side of the door are richly-decorated columns, some with conventional designs of leaves and flowers, others, more ambitious, where birds and beasts chase one another in eternal pursuit. Yet others have tiny medallions with heads of famous men. Some of these were badly damaged, and a nineteenth century restorer added those of Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi and Mazzini! The whole has the life and the intricacy of an Indian temple, but with a grace, a harmony, and a symmetry that could only be Latin in origin. It was finished about 1433.

Another thing was the superb frieze of seventy-one heads that encircles the outer wall of the apse. It is a carven history of Dalmatia in stone. Every head is different, and every head has character. There you will find girls' heads of classical beauty, fierce Slavs with long moustaches and high cheek-bones like the Ličani of the present day, shaven Turkish warriors, Byzantines, Italians, Tatars, nobles, lawyers, priests, and laymen. One knight has had his nose amputated, a common

punishment of medieval times. Another, an Italian condottiere probably, is astonishingly like Mussolini. Others you will still see to-day, walking in the marketplace. All are little masterpieces of wit and of beauty. From the three dark corners, ferocious lions glare.

In the interior of the cathedral many of the details have the humour of the Gothic. One column, in a darkened corner, is decorated with two cherubs' heads. The one turned towards the interior of the church is singing praises with happy, fat-cheeked face; the other, turned towards the shadowy wall, has the staring eyes, the quivering lips, and the tear-stained face of a child afraid of the dark.

And of course the roof, which is of stone barrel-vaulting. Indeed the whole cathedral, including the roof and dome, is of stone, a really most astonishing feat of technique, considering the size of the building and the period at which it was built. The main portal also is magnificent, though the two sculpture niches are still empty. After spending millions of ducats on their cathedral, the people of Šibenik had not enough money left to pay for the statues.

On one of the occasions when I visited the cathedral, I found the learned canon explaining its wonders to a party of schoolboys from Bačka Palanka in the Danube Province. I felt sorry both for him and for them. He was obviously in love with his cathedral, and hurt by any lack of interest; they, on the other hand, were not of an age to enjoy its sincere and contemplative beauty, and only wanted a chance to bathe before having to return to their torrid plain.

He was a temperamental and cynical guide, with a healthy contempt for modern times. He carefully pointed out that the millions subscribed by the Šibenčani had really been spent on the cathedral, and not, as now, frittered away in commissions and sub-commissions. Myself, I doubt his words. For Orsini, at least, made

enough money out of the building to buy or build a magnificent house in the city. Over the carven doorway is the bear of the famous Roman Orsinis, to which, it seems, Giorgio had no right whatsoever.

But he was not content with the cathedral, but took his party around all the antiquities of the town, flying up and down narrow stairwayed alleys, with round eyes and flying black coat-tails that made him look like an enormous bat. There are many antiquities in Šibenik. At last, like King Henry, I prayed that Heaven might rid me of that turbulent priest.

. . . . .

Every one who visits Šibenik makes an excursion to the falls of the Krka. Thither I too decided to go, but also decided to combine it with an excursion to the island cloister of Visovac and the town of Skradin, the descendant of ancient Scardona, which was the chief city of Liburnia and, after Salona, of the whole coastline.

It was rather an expensive and complicated journey, as I had to hire a motor-launch to reach the island of Visovac. The tourist agency got it for me, however, and then told me that an English lady also wished to visit Visovac. Would I mind if she shared the expenses and the facilities? I never mind meeting new people, so said I would call for her next morning.

When I got to her hotel next morning a vigorous old lady appeared. It would be ungallant of me to guess how old. Let us say that I was surprised to see her travelling alone so far from home. But she had a gallant spirit, and made little of the wearisomeness of the journey which I am afraid I exaggerated a bit. Let me say at once, however, that she proved a very charming travelling companion.

The people of the continent like to laugh at these vigorous old Englishwomen. But they make a great mistake. There is often more brains and character in their

little fingers than in all the fluffy feather-pates of Vienna and Budapest. Often they have spent their golden years in the wild places of the world; one whom I met later had passed eighteen years on the Canadian prairies, and another, ten years in organizing a Turkish university. May I add another tribute to their hardly-earned laurels.

The river was low, and therefore the Krka falls not at their best. But none the less they were still fine. The river spreads out first into a wide lake, dotted with countless islands, looking from above like the pieces of a green jigsaw puzzle scattered haphazard on a brilliant blue cloth. The stony mountains around heighten the colour and the contrast. Then they gather themselves together and the river forms a single stream, to leap irresistibly downwards in terraced silver cascades, three hundred feet wide. The total fall is about a hundred and thirty feet, the air is filled with spray and groaning thunder echoes from the hills. Just below the falls the river again widens into the smooth and placid Gulf of Skradin.

We lingered for some time, watching the rush of water. Fruit trees, watered by the spray, clung to little cornices in the rocks. The figs especially were bearing well, but it will be a bold man who gathers them. But time was pressing, and we went back to find our motor-boat, with ears still deafened by the falls.

After a few asthmatic coughs, the little outboard motor began to chug contentedly, and we slowly plugged our way up against the current. The river here is more like a suggestion of lakes, opening one out of another and quite silent, save for a few water-birds and the chugging of our engine. After the falls, there is not a house in sight.

In the third reach we saw the island convent of Visovac. The building is modern but dignified, with its church tower matching in height the tall fringe of poplars along the banks. It seemed a perfect spot for rest and meditation, though in fact the monks lead a busy enough life.

We were welcomed graciously, with true monastic hospitality. The permanent staff of the monastery is small; four brothers, thirteen novices, and some servants. But there are usually a number of guests, priests resting after the troubles of their cures. The monks are Franciscans, and all, by reason of their work in the villages, have to be Yugoslavs. There is not a great deal to see in the church and convent. The settlement dates from 1445, when it was occupied by Paulician hermits, but they were soon replaced after the Turkish invasion by Bosnian Franciscans. The monastery was built in 1576, but was destroyed by the Turks and the monks forced to flee in 1648. But in 1675 they again returned. The present buildings date mostly from 1725, but have been several times repaired. There are a few good books in the library.

Incidentally, the popular derivation of the name Visovac from *visiti*, to hang, because the Turks are said to have hanged the monks on their own trees, is a pious invention. The name is older than the Turkish conquest. Besides, it would be very difficult to hang a number of men on a poplar or a cypress, and there are no other trees.

Over coffee in the refectory I began an argument about the precise nature of the first owners, the Paulicians. But before we could reach any conclusions we were interrupted by a party of gendarmes who were looking for a murderer from a nearby village. The monk knew the man and shook his head sadly. After a cursory look around, the gendarmes went back to their boat and across the river.

On our return, I said that I wanted to see Skradin if it were not too much for my companion. Not a bit! She was still spry and energetic. It was only the chauffeur who needed warming up.

In Fortis' list of the literary worthies of Šibenik there are two who wrote of the beauties of the Gulf of Skradin; one, Giovanni Nardino, in Latin elegiacs, and the other, Petar Disnić, a long poem in Croat on the natural history

of the district. Disnić is enthusiastic about the eels of the gulf, but, in addition to eels, 'a more wonderful creature was seen here, for a marine unsociable man was caught'. It was probably a seal, but I would like to know more, just in case.

Alas for Skradin! Its history has passed it by. As for ancient Scardona, even its exact site is uncertain. Economic and political reasons have reduced it to a mere five hundred or so souls. Under the Nelepići of Knin, under the Šubići, even under the Venetians, it was still important, the principal market for the cattle of the mainland and the wine of the coast. It was also famous for its silkworms. But it was always of a turbulent nature, and in 1809 rebelled against Napoleon's marshal, Marmont, who wanted to raze it to the ground till not a stone remained. Skradin was only saved from destruction by paying the colossal fine of a hundred thousand ducats. It is a measure of the town's prosperity that it could do so much.

Under Austrian rule, the city languished. The harbour silted up, and large vessels could no longer call; the low water-meadows of the Krka flooded and became marshland. The trade went all to Šibenik, and the grim spectre of malaria appeared. For the last sixty or seventy years Skradin has had a bad reputation.

At the present time it is recovering a little. The local mayor was one of the most practical and intelligent men I have talked with; I found him by chance in the shady, tree-lined square before the kafana.

Seeing that he was a sensible man, I was able to ask him more or less indiscreet questions. He told me that the two creeds in Skradin, for the people are mixed Catholic and Orthodox, got on very well together, and rather despised the polemics of the priests.

'Even the Šubići,' he said, 'celebrated their Slava and Mladen Šubić married the daughter of Tsar Dušan.'

This rather cryptic utterance has a meaning. For the Šubići were the most powerful of the Croat, and therefore Catholic, nobles, whereas the Slava is a purely Serb, and therefore Orthodox, feast, and Dušan was the greatest of the Serb rulers.

He gave me, unconsciously, a new angle on Dalmatian history, that of the small town that is not interested in dukes and dynasties, but in roads and reservoirs. He spoke highly of the Turks, who once ruled Skradin; the Catholic church is built over a demolished mosque. Their justice, until the last age, was efficient, swift, and at least as honest as their neighbours'. Also they kept the roads in good repair, built hans for travellers, and provided springs and fountains. He also spoke highly of the French, despite Marmont's ferocious punishment of Skradin. They began reforms which have had to wait until the present time to be completed. For they left too soon. Among them were the provision of drinking water cisterns for every village, a system of agrarian reform, the abolition of useless religious orders, the protection of the forests, and a tax on goats, the last ravagers of Dalmatia. They were drastic, but necessary. For the present Government also he had a good word. His bitter condemnation was for the Austrians who neglected Dalmatia and, for that reason, brought or increased the malaria.

I asked him how the matter stood now. The people around me had not the look of a malarial district. It was good. The scourge has almost been stamped out. He described the methods; firstly, the use of petrol, which was not successful because too expensive, and the worst breeding-places were in the deserted quarries on the hillsides, where the peasants had to water their flocks. So a certain kind of fish was introduced which lives on mosquito larvae. He was enthusiastic about those fish. They had practically cleaned up the district, and the peasants could once again water their stock in safety.

There was no more malaria in Skradin. Only a few older people still suffered from recurrent fevers.

‘Look at the children!’ he said.

The moment was well chosen. A number of happy and healthy children were playing with a big dog in the shady square. As we turned to look, one of them fell, and the dog rapidly and skilfully removed her bathing drawers.

‘No,’ I said, ‘not much malaria there.’



## VI

### VANISHED GLORIES: BIOGRAD AND VRANA

**I** LIKE Biograd-na-Moru. So I retraced my steps in order to revisit it. Also, I wanted to see Vrana.

Every boy with any imagination has at one time or another studied the atlas and decided: 'I want to go just there.' It is a habit that persists into later life. The atlas always remains the best picture-book in the world.

After a good many turns of fate, I have found myself in the Balkans, and even now I like to look at maps of the Balkans and decide that I must go and see just this or that place. But I have one advantage over the dreaming boy. Sometimes I can make my dreams come true. Sometimes, indeed, I have wished they had remained dreams, but that is by the way. Anyhow, one of the places I had determined to visit was Vrana.

I was to be the guest of the proprietor of the Illyria Hotel, a Russo-Armenian idealist who dreams of turning Biograd-na-Moru into another Abbazia. He talks in terms of luxurious hotels, restaurants staked on piles over the smooth waters of the Pasman canal, luxurious villas, and tennis-courts. But I like to listen—every enthusiast is in his own way a genius, and there is little danger of his ever succeeding. But what he has already done is considerable. From the boat the Hotel Illyria seems almost as large as Biograd itself. It is not in the least in tune with the landscape, but on the other hand it is so different that it gives one a not unpleasant sense of shock. But, despite its great pretensions, it is comfortable and welcoming. I enjoyed my stay there.

Mr. Karagianian has certainly picked a good spot. Biograd has all the natural advantages. It lies on a flat

plain, fertile and well-watered—and not too stony!—with the snow-capped summits of the Velebit ranged like sentinels behind it. It has pleasant forests and good bathing; and the Pasman canal is perfect for sailing. But it needs better communications before it can become world famous. The fast steamer service passes it by, and the telephone, I know by experience, is shocking. Perhaps the new motor-road will help its development.

Biograd was, at one time, the most famous city of Croat littoral. But today it has the least to show for it. The present city is in reality a pleasant little Dalmatian village, with scarcely an old house in it. But in the days of light sailing ships the Pasman canal, between Biograd and the island of Pasman, was the only practicable winter channel down the coast. It was the only one with any good harbours. Whoever held it, held the eastern Adriatic. Therefore, it was the scene of continual sea-fighting. For two hundred and fifty years, from 600 to 850, Byzantine Zara and Croat Nin contended for it, and the whole stretch of coast from Nin down to Sukošane was known as the Graveyard. Then, for a hundred and sixty years, the fleet of the Croat kings was the most powerful in the Adriatic, and exacted tribute from all who passed through. This period of glory began with the great sea victory of Prince Mioslav in 839, and ended with the defeat of Svetoslav in a battle against the combined sea forces of Venice, Krk, Rab, and Zara, in A.D. 1000. Svetoslav's brother, Suronja, had to give territory and hostages.

It was in memory of this victory, which gave Venice the naval command of the Adriatic, that the famous ceremony of the Bucentoro was commenced. The Doge went down to the sea in his gilded barge and threw a ring into the waves, saying: 'I wed thee, O sea, in sign of our full and eternal mastery over thee.' It was carried out regularly until 1737.

A few years later, under Krešimir IV in 1059, the

Croat capital was moved from land-locked Nin to open Biograd. There he built palaces and a famous monastery. It was the centre of a bishopric, and the residence of the papal legate. It also became the coronation city of the Croat kings.

Croats and Venetians were then fighting for mastery of the Dalmatian coastal cities, which changed their allegiance with bewildering rapidity. But the Venetian Doge was in 1123 in Palestine, and the Croats took almost all of them. On his return, the Doge besieged Biograd with a strong army: 'Let this infernal spot which menaces Venice be razed to its foundations.'

He literally carried out his threat. Biograd was first burnt and then systematically destroyed. Zara, which had remained faithful to Venice, was given the island of Pasman. The bishop fled to Skradin, and the citizens to Šibenik and Dolac. For two hundred years the site remained waste.

It was destroyed on Good Friday 1126, and on Good Friday the people of Biograd still say a special mass and believe that a Black Knight comes out of the waves, as he is supposed to have done that terrible day to save the last Croat queen who reigned in Biograd.

But Zara later rebelled and suffered much the same fate as Biograd, and it was on this site that the refugees founded New Zara. But two years later they returned to their own city, and Biograd was known as Old Zara, which name it still retains in Italian.

Today the archaeologist must use the eye of faith. My pleasantly bibulous friend, the local professor, showed me scraps of walls that may or may not have been part of the city ramparts or the great cathedral church. I took his word for it. The destruction of Biograd was pretty thorough. But he had unearthed at least one genuine and interesting inscription, in glagolitic; a grant of Prince Mioslav, dated 845. Incidentally he had a theory about the Celts having greatly influenced the Serbo-Croat

language. It may be: but he rode his hobby-horse too hard, and it led him into absurdities. Still, it was strange to find an earnest student of the Irish language in Biograd-na-Moru.

Being the Croat capital, Biograd was also a great centre of the glagolithic service, which is still in use there. On this subject my archaeologist friend was far more secure than on his Celtic roots. So we went together by boat across the Pasman channel to the monastery of Čokovac, near the village of Tkon, which had been a glagolithic monastery until it was closed by Napoleon in 1808. It is empty now, a little away from the village on a low hill overlooking the sea. Those old monks certainly had an eye for a beautiful situation.

All the inscriptions are in glagolithic, even those mentioning Latin churchmen. Most of the more learned glagolithic priests of the district came either from Čokovac or from the college at Šibenik. It seems probable that this was the famous monastery founded by Krešimir in 1059.

High up on the main wall near the entrance is a tiny plaque with two stone heads, probably a relic of the famous cathedral church of Biograd. My companion said they represented Krešimir and his wife. He asked me to take a photo of it, and I nearly broke my neck climbing upon a rickety stone-pine in order to get near enough to do so.

It is curious, incidentally, what little impression these Croat kings have made on the minds of their countrymen. The peasants will tell you tales or sing you songs of Diocletian, of Ivo of Senj, of the Šubići, or of the Serbian kings and heroes, such as Lazar or Kraljević Marko. But of Tomislav or Krešimir, of Svetoslav or Suronja, they know absolutely nothing. They are meat only for the professors.

Next day I found a car and went to Vrana. What had attracted me on the map was the great lake of Vrana, and

what had attracted my imagination was its connection with the Templars.

The lake is low and marshy, and the Vranjsko polje exceedingly green and fertile. Much of the land around it has been reclaimed, and it is no longer malarious, as it was in Fortis' day. His description of it had not been encouraging.

The actual ruins of Vrana are still impressive. Considering that it was a fortress, and not a city, they cover an immense area. But the going is very heavy, thick with thorns and brambles. It seems largely used now as a pasture for donkeys and goats, the only animals that can get some sustenance from its rank tangle.

One of the towers is still fairly intact, and one can get from its summit, if one is active, a general idea of the ground plan and see easily enough where Croat or Turkish masonry ends and Venetian begins. Of the great hall of audience there is little left. We stumbled in and out of the ruined walls, watched curiously by the chauffeur, who quite evidently thought us mad to take such exercise in the heat.

Fortis evidently suffered in the same way. He writes: 'Some have thought that Blandona was anciently seated there; but no vestige of Roman antiquity is to be seen about these walls, and ruined, uninhabited towers. I searched with great diligence, among the stones, for inscriptions, but in vain; and was happy at last to get from among them, without any accident.'

Save for a doubtful association with the Liburnian city of Arauzona, Vrana is first mentioned in 1076 as a crown-land of the Croat kings, who gave it in that year to Pope Gregory VII for the use of the papal legate at the Croat Court. But after the union of the Croat and Hungarian crowns, the legate no longer resided at Biograd, and it was given by King Bela III in 1138 to the Templars.

Under that order, Vrana became very important, for

the Prior controlled all the property of the order for Croatia and Hungary, and ruled like an independent prince. And after the order was suppressed in 1312, the same pomp was held by the Prior of the Order of St. John, which succeeded them. 'His power increased to such a degree that it sometimes preponderated even in the affairs of the kingdom.' The Prior even attempted the role of kingmaker, and tried to unite Bosnia and Croatia under King Tvrtko I of Bosnia. He captured Elizabeth of Hungary and her daughter Mary and kept them prisoners at Novigrad. Later he caused Elizabeth to be drowned. Only the death of Tvrtko made his schemes go awry.

His plot, had it been successful, might have changed the history of the South Slavs.

Vrana then came into the hands of Vladislav of Naples, also a pretender to the Croato-Hungarian throne, but, seeing he could do nothing, he sold it to the Venetians for 100,000 ducats and went home. It remained in Venetian hands for 129 years.

In 1538 it was taken by the Turks, and another glorious period in its history began. Under the Sanjak bey, Alibeg Atlagić, it became known as the 'garden of the Lika sanjak'. Later the famous family of Ferhatpašić became hereditary begs of Vrana. And it was here that the Turkish admiral, Jusuf Mačković, was born, who defeated the Venetians at sea and was drowned at Constantinople by a grateful master. But its most famous ruler was Halil Beg, Pasha of the Lika, whose extortions and raids caused the Candian war. In 1647 it was again taken by the Venetians, who captured Halil Beg. His armour still hangs as a trophy in Bologna.

With their usual ferocity, the Venetians destroyed all the Croat cities of the district and reduced the garden of the Lika to an unhealthy marsh, an unprofitable fief of the Borelli family, who still bear the title Princes of Vrana. It was not reclaimed until 1897.

A dignitary of the Zagreb Church still uses the title Prior of Vrana.

It was getting late, but we decided before going to the lake to visit the village and the han erected by the luckless Mačković. It is still in fairly good condition. Fortis mentions it, and pays an overdue tribute to the Turks: 'The foundations of Hans, or Caravanserais, do great honour to the Turkish nation, and they are very numerous throughout the Empire.'

The interior is still in use, but is more of a farmyard than a han, and we picked our way through byres and stalls to the incessant clamour of angry dogs. The sleeping quarters and the open hearths for the caravan-cooks are still in good preservation. After the famous Leaden Inn, Kuršumli Han, at Skoplje, the Han at Vrana is the best example of a Moslem caravanserai in Yugoslavia.

We returned along the shore of the lake, which is now salt, although until 1640 writers mention it as fresh. I was not disappointed in it. It had just the desolate melancholy beauty that I imagined it would have when I placed my finger on the map. There is something almost ill-omened about it, the sort of malevolent haunting beauty of a Poe tale. On a medieval map one would not be surprised to find it marked: 'Here bee monsters!'

The next day, on a perfect morning, I left Biograd.

Our way led through a maze of islands. The captain, who was discussing naval strategy, pointed out the channels to me. I remarked that the Yugoslavs do not need an offensive naval force. They can lie hid behind their islands and harry their enemies with light cruisers, submarines, and hydroplanes. They do not need dreadnoughts.

'No,' said the captain, pointing to the scattered archipelago of rocks and islets. 'There are our battleships.'

I was not anxious to spend another night at Šibenik. Perhaps I might meet that pig again. So I took counsel with the captain.



MENDING NETS, ISLAND OF SILBA





'Why don't you get off at Zlarin, then?'

I did, and am eternally grateful to that captain. It was one of the most delightful days of all my trip. It is a quiet little town on a quiet little island, famous for its coral fisheries. The people are friendly, the wine and the inns are good. I got a room in one and went down to the twilit courtyard to have a glass and some supper. There were about half-a-dozen men at one of the tables, and I asked if I might bring my wine over. When they heard I was from England, three of them began to speak English with me. For every man in Zlarin is, or has been, a sailor, and most have served in English or American waters. Almost as many men are overseas as are on the island itself.

The company was the best in the world; working men, who are masters of their craft, who have seen the world and are intelligent enough to talk about it. Most of them were islanders. There was the innkeeper, himself an old sailor, an old peasant who had been captain of a fishing vessel on the Alaska coast, two pilots, a ship captain, and a sergeant from the coast defence. He was not an islander, but a Serb from Belgrade, a leather-worker by trade, who wanted to go to Paris to perfect his craft as soon as his military service was finished.

The conversation ranged from sea to sea and from country to country. It scarcely touched on the two subjects of the conversationally imbecile; politics and women. A good deal of it was about fishing, in all the seven seas.

The moon rose, full and shining, flooding the courtyard with light. The wine was good, and a friendly cat settled upon my knee. No evening could have passed more pleasantly.

Next morning I went to look at Zlarin, and my good impression of the night before remained. I examined the Co-operative of the coral fishers, where every official is himself a fisherman, and where they work the coral

into beautiful forms with tools that might have been used by Tubal Cain. I inspected the special nets, shaped like cardinals' hats, by which the coral is taken, and was interested in the system of book-keeping whereby my simple purchases were credited to the fisherman who had taken the coral and the workman who had fashioned it. And I was pleased to hear that the Co-operative is doing well.

All the women of Zlarin wear national costume, a rare thing among the islands. And a very beautiful one it is, with black bolero over a white blouse, piped with red lanyards, a black skirt, and a brightly coloured kerchief. I tried to get a photo, but all the prettiest girls ran away when they saw the camera. I mentioned this to the innkeeper.

'Nearly all their husbands or fiancés are in America or at sea. They are afraid that if the photo is published, one of them will see it and get jealous. Besides, those are not their best dresses. You should have seen them when the film company was here!' for last year a German company shot a film in Zlarin called the *Coral Princess*.

Indeed, the women of Zlarin are extraordinary. They are proud, they are beautiful, and they are chaste. Their husbands are sometimes away for five or six years on end, but adultery is almost unheard of. And strong too!

In August 1936 they held a women's regatta here, between the women of the neighbouring islands, Zlarin, Šepurina, Žirje, and Kaprije. It was no joke. The races were in heavy fishing boats over a course of fifteen hundred metres!

But if the women are proud, so too are the men. They consider themselves as sailors second to none, now that Perast has fallen from her high estate. They like to quote the old saying: 'First the men of Perast, then the men of Zlarin, then the men of Bakar, and then the rest.' In the days of the old Austrian Lloyd, the crack ships of the former Empire, more than half the sailors were from

Zlarin. One old captain has turned his house into a sort of museum of the former Lloyd.

Indeed, Zlarin is a pleasant place. I am not surprised that the nobles of Šibenik chose it as a retreat when their city was ravaged by the plague and only 1,500 souls left alive there. What a Decameron it must have been! But, alas, there was no Boccaccio.

## VII

### REBELLIOUS SPLIT

‘THE small river,’ the Jader, ‘that does not run above three miles, obstructed, here and there, by tophaceous banks, nourishes in its mossy grots an exquisite species of trout. Hence some author, who must have been a much better judge of good eating than of the actions of great men, took occasion to write that Diocletian (acting worse than Esau) renounced the pleasure of commanding almost all the then known earth, to eat quietly his bellyful of these fishes, in his magnificent retirement at Spalatro. I know not if Diocletian was as great a lover of fish as he was of herbs; but believe that Spalatro, without any motive of gluttony, must then have been a delicious habitation; and, to strengthen this belief, I imagine the neighbouring mountains to have been covered with ancient woods which, in our times (1787), by its horrid bareness, reverberates an almost insupportable heat in the summer days. It is certain, that a turn for philosophy and perhaps a trait of wise policy, was the motive of Diocletian’s retirement. He lived ten years in tranquillity at Spalatro, and perhaps would have enjoyed a longer life, if the letters of Constantius and Licinius had not come to disturb him. Notwithstanding all the ill that the Christian authors have written (one copying the other) of this Dalmatine Emperor, perhaps with greater piety than impartiality and truth, it must be confessed, that he was a man of extraordinary merit. He mounted the throne without any effusion of civil blood, led to it by his own virtues; and after a reign of twenty years, gave perhaps the greatest example of philosophical moderation, that ever was heard of in the world. I reckon it a singular honour to Diocletian, his

having been praised by Julian, among the Caesars, as he certainly would not have spared him, if he could have said anything to his prejudice.'

Pliny says that it was cabbages.

Even as, through the Middle Ages, the Palace of Diocletian actually *was* Split—there are still three hundred houses within its walls—so his mighty presence dominated the life of the city. Though it has had a long and stormy history and is now the greatest seaport of Dalmatia and one of the three most active and energetic cities of Yugoslavia, the visitor's first thought is of Diocletian. The citizens, too, do him honour, though I question whether that honour has not gone too far in the creation of 'Diocletian's Bar', which is a most ordinary *boite de nuit*.

I will not again describe the magnificent ruins of the Palace. I have done it before, and others have done it before me. Besides, every visitor may get innumerable guides and pamphlets describing the principal details for little or nothing. For those who want real information, I recommend the invaluable Jackson and, of course, Robert Adam's drawings. The best general description is still that in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*.

Adam was here in 1757, a few years before Fortis, and made detailed drawings of the Palace, which later became the basis for the Adam style. You may find the work of Diocletian's architects repeated and embellished in many English homes. But his investigations drew upon him the suspicion of the Venetian authorities, and he was put into prison as a spy, whence he escaped only by the intervention of the Venetian commandant, Robert Graeme. That name interests me. How did a Graeme come to such a position? Perhaps he was an adherent of the Stuarts who had fled from England after the '15 or the '45? But no one could tell me.

I have before me a detailed history of Split. It is one of the most bloodthirsty and complicated documents

that I have ever had to unravel, and I fear that its intricacies would merely bore the average reader. So I will give only the shortest précis in as telegraphic a style as possible.

The Palace was built between 295 and 305, and Diocletian lived there until 313. The next fact was the murder there of Julius Nepos, pretender to the Empire, and more or less Caesar of Dalmatia, in 480. It was damaged but not sacked by the Avars, who destroyed Salona, and then became the refuge of the Salonitans. Its first 'mayor' was a certain Severus.

The Croats could not take it in their raids, and it became part of the Byzantine theme of Dalmatia. Neither could the Franks, and it remained Byzantine after the Peace of Aachen in 812. But in 882 a local document of Prince Trpimir mentions Croats and Latins as living in amity within its walls.

Under the great Croat king, Tomislav, two Church Councils were held in Split, in 925 and 968. Despite the resistance of the Croat bishops, led by Gregory of Nin, the Latin service was then preferred above the Croat. Split became the centre of an archbishopric, and ecclesiastically supreme over all the Dalmatian cities.

It was then ruled by the Croat kings, who held the titles of Eparch and Patrician from the Byzantine emperor. In 1000 the Venetians took the city, under Doge Peter II, Orseolo. Apparently they were not seriously opposed, and it was here that the treaty was signed between them and Suronja. It was then '*nobilissimam et validam urbem, quae totius Dalmatiae metropolis constat*'. About 1069 it was retaken by the Croat king, Petar Krešimir IV, who again lost it for a short time to the Normans, who were in their turn driven out by the Venetians. It was then a semi-autonomous city, governed by its own statutes.

From then until 1217 it changed hands several times, between Croato-Hungarians and Venetians, while retaining a nominal allegiance to Byzantium.

Split now became more powerful than her rulers. She had her own statutes and her own independence under an elected podesta, who was sometimes a Venetian and sometimes a member of the powerful Croat families of Nelipić and Šubić. Long years are occupied in petty wars with Trogir, the Poljica republic, and the pirates of Omiš.

In the fourteenth century the people of Split were so much in the power of the Šubići that they felt their liberties endangered. So they intrigued both with Venice and with the Croato-Hungarian Crown. The changes of this period are positively bewildering. Every five or ten years Split has a different overlord.

In 1390 that overlord was the most famous of the Bosnian Kings, Stefan Tvrtko, and in 1403 it was his general, Hrvoje Vukčić, who remained until 1413 and made himself decidedly unpopular. On his disgrace the people sang a mass of thankfulness for their deliverance from Pharaoh. But this may have been due to his leanings towards the Bogumil heresy, for they had little real cause to regret him. Without his strong rule, Split lost much land and power, and in 1409 suffered the indignity of being sold to Venice for 100,000 ducats.

Through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Split, under Venetian governors, had her hands full in defending herself against the Turks, especially after the fall of Klis, and had little time for civil strife. The Turkish frontier was on the Jader, only a mile or so away from the city. After the fall of the Venetian republic in 1797 she had the same history as the rest of Dalmatia.

All these people have left traces on the architecture and appearance of Split. Mostly, of course, Diocletian, and after him Hrvoje Vukčić and the Venetians.

But I will leave the rest of Split to the professional guides and try to explain the curious influence that this city always has on me every time I visit it. For though the past hangs about it like a veil, it is essentially a city



of the present. Though the real people of Split are not sailors—till a few years ago not a single Splićanin was a sea-captain—it is the greatest port in Dalmatia, and a magnet to the islanders who form the most energetic portion of its populace. It is, for the visitor, essentially a place of passage. Yet one lingers in it and the days slip by unconsciously. One does nothing very much, save watch the wheeling swallows in the Central Square, or stroll up and down the molo, where the sailing boats form a floating market, selling wine and oil and fruit from planks hung out over their sterns. Yet one's days seem full of incident. Its people are gay, careless, and eternally rebellious. They are always either singing or protesting. It is as unstable as the waters of its harbour, and yet it endures. It has many of the less pleasant aspects of a great waterside, yet it remains somehow aristocratic. And its surroundings are still worthy of the retirement of an emperor.

The wide sweep of the harbour and the tremendous amphitheatre of the mountains give it an air of majesty when approached from the sea. And, indeed, those mountains are the barriers of another world. Split looks outwards: the sea brings her citizens new goods and new ideas from the outer world. The people of the mountains look inward: their horizon is bounded by their massive rocks, and their conception of the outer world is limited to Split herself. As late as 1922 there were still men who could not believe that there is no longer a Caesar in Vienna or a Sultan in Tsarigrad. They were of the eternal verities and could not change. It is the young men from the army that speak of the king in Belgrade. Mountain women, coming into the city, will listen open-mouthed to the tales of some returned emigrant and then ask timidly:

'You have been in America?'

'Yes.'

'Well, how is my son, Jovo Matutinović?'

In the villages every one knows every one else. How could it be otherwise in America?

Rebellious Split, on the other hand, is keenly political. In 1910 they saluted Alexander on his return from Montenegro as their future ruler. They furnished many martyrs during the war to realize that rule. And now that it has at last been realized, they are always searching for fresh causes of revolt. It is possible that St. Jerome came from somewhere near Split. It would explain his splenetic temper and his heartfelt repentance:

‘Spare me, O Lord. For I am a Dalmatian.’

. . . . .

There are a lot of places to go to near Split. One's difficulty is, not to find, but to choose. There is Trogir, for example, that most lovely of little medieval cities, with a cathedral almost as beautiful as that of Šibenik. When you are there, ask any of the older women how they drove out the Italian army of occupation, armed mostly with umbrellas! The story is true, but no one save Kipling could make it sound so.

But for purely personal reasons, which have no part in this book, I did not want to go again to Trogir. ‘Nessun maggior dolore. . . .’ But I counsel every one else to do so.

Besides a wanderer cannot wander everywhere. I decided to use Split as a headquarters, and first revisit Klis and Salona and then go to the islands.

. . . . .

Salona is not far from Split, and was, in classical times, far the greater city. Indeed, Split was little more than the palace; the classical site was Epetion, the modern Stobreč.

It was really an important city, capital of Dalmatia, with a population estimated at between forty and sixty

thousand souls. It is celebrated by many classical writers, including Lucan, whose lines:

Qua maris Adriatici longas ferit unda Salonae  
Et tepidum in molles zephyros excurrit Hyader

no writer has been able to omit, and was mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitos as being half as large as Constantinople itself. That, I fear, was an exaggeration, but it gives a measure of its importance. Its great period began after the Civil War, when it had luck or foresight enough to hold to Caesar against Pompey, and under Augustus the Colonia Martia Julia Salonae was one of the leading cities of the Empire. More important for the archaeologist, it was one of the greatest centres of early Roman Christianity, and, because of its early destruction, those monuments have not been overlaid by more recent piety. They date from, roughly, the end of the third century, the epoch of Venantius and Domnius, to the beginning of the seventh, when it was destroyed. That is a rare period, so Salona has a great reputation. It is probably the finest site yet discovered for early Roman Christianity.

That is, indeed, the great advantage of discoveries in the Balkans over those in Greece and Italy. For the Greeks and Romans rebuilt their cities and continued to live in them, whereas the nomad Slavs and Avars, who destroyed the classical civilization of the Balkans, usually left the sites waste and built their villages elsewhere. So that such damage as has been done since their destruction has been done by time, by amateur archaeologists, or by peasants requiring building material. Often the sites have been entirely forgotten and covered with earth, only waiting excavation. At the worst, one may find a few cottages at or near the site, usually with some such names as Zlokućani (the evil houses) or Gradište (the buildings), etc. The same is, of course, true of British sites such as Verulamium, which is some way

from medieval St. Albans, but Britain was a wild and distant province, whereas the Balkans were the bridge between Greece and Italy, were highly civilized, and, under the Claudians, the centre of the Roman Empire.

Salona was, from the archaeological point of view, twice destroyed; once by the Avars in the seventh century, who left it ruined, but more or less intact, and again by the Venetians, who feared that the ruins might shelter Turkish raiding bands. The second destruction was, archaeologically, the more regrettable. Senator Giambattista Giustiniani, writing in the sixteenth century, before this destruction, says:

‘The nobility, grandeur, and magnificence of the city of Salona, may be imagined from the vaults and arches of the wonderful theatre, which are seen at this day; from the vast stones of the finest marble, which lies scattered on, or buried in the fields; from the beautiful column of three pieces of marble which is still standing in the place where they say the arsenal was, towards the seashore; and from the many arches of surprising beauty, supported by very high marble columns; the height of the arches is a stone-throw, and above them was an aqueduct, which reached from Salona to Spalatro—There are to be seen many ruins and vestiges of large palaces, and many ancient epitaphs may be read, on fine marble stones; but the earth, which is increased, has buried the most ancient stones, and the most valuable things.’

Perhaps it was this earth that has preserved much of the ruins of Salona as we now see them. Certainly it was the love and care of Monsignor Bulić that uncovered them. He was a most remarkable old man. I met him, in 1925, shortly before his death, and am proud of the memory. Not only did he restore Salona and make it a place of pilgrimage to the archaeologists of the world, but he built himself a little villa in the Roman style within the circuit of the ancient walls and literally lived

with his work. Further, he was a patriot and an enthusiast, and had that subtle sense of humour which, despite the comic papers, is common among really learned men. I remembered, for example, his exquisite list of light refreshments obtainable at the villa, and on this occasion copied it down verbatim. Here it is:

SALONIS  
AD  
BONUM  
PASTOREM  
VILLICUS  
EFFOSSIONUM  
DABIT  
VINUM SALONITARUM SIVE ALBUM SIVE AUBRUM SIVE NIGRUM  
OPTIMUM QUOD NON CORRUPIT MALITIA HOMINUM  
ZYTHUM                      BOSNIACUM  
AQUAM SALUBERRIMAM IADRI FLUMINIS  
AQUAM FONTIS MATTONIANI  
PERNAM SALONITANAM  
CLUPEAS ISSAEAS SALSAS  
OVA RECENTIA VEL SORBILIA VEL COCTA  
BUTYRUM SALONITANUM RECENS  
CASEUM VEL DALMATICUM VEL HELVETICUM  
PANEM BIS COCTUM VEL DOMESTICUM  
LAC VACCINUM  
COGNAC SPALATINUM  
MEL QUOD APIS TUSCULANA CONDIDIT  
POTIONEM EX FABA ARABICA  
FICUS UVAM PIRA POMA MELONES EX AGRO SALONITANO  
(TEMPORE ET AESTIVO ET AUTUMNALI)  
IMAGINES ANTIQUITATUM SALONITANARUM  
PHOTOGRAPHICAS ET  
EPISTULAS SALUTATORIAS VILLICUS VENUMDABIT.

There is also a good story about him and Bernard Shaw. It is probably not true, as, as far as I remember, Bulić was dead before Shaw's visit. But—*si non e vero. . .*

A patriotic sentiment has led the people of Split to erect, in the central peristyle of Diocletian's palace, a

colossal statue of Gregory of Nin. The effect is provocative, as Gregory was a Christian and a nationalist, while Diocletian was opposed to both. The bishop is enormous, menacing, and impressive, the work of Meštrović. But it is in no way Roman. Nothing could be more opposed to the classical spirit, even in the debased form of Diocletian's day, than this crude vigour and striving. Bulić acknowledged its greatness, but was indignant about its being placed just there. The styles did not mix: it was a glaring false quantity.

'Yes,' Shaw is supposed to have replied. 'I agree with you. If I were the town council of Split, I would pull down Diocletian's palace.'

. . . . .

The road to Klis is calculated to make any tapeworm giddy. I remembered crawling up it in an ancient Chevrolet bus to see the tournament of the Alka at Sinj, and, at the remembrance, even the open touring-car in which we were seemed to smell once more of overheated leather cushions and scorching bearings. For Klis is high up in the mountains, guarding the pass that leads from Split to Sinj, the Lika, and, eventually, Bosnia. It was for centuries one of the key positions of the Balkans.

On the other side of the funnel-like gorge winds the narrow-gauge railway to Sinj. Its course is even more complicated than the road. After a while one gets used to these mountain railways that look like a coil of rope carelessly flung over the mountain saddle in enormous loops and whorls. But the line to Klis is one of the most far flung.

For it has a peculiar problem of its own. The gorge is like a funnel, with its narrow end resting on the cup of the mountains. Behind these, in winter, the bora piles up, more like water than wind, until it literally overflows into the gorge. Then it sweeps downwards with concen-

trated and irresistible force. In the early days, before the windbreaks were built, it several times derailed the train, and even now the services are suspended if the bora is blowing at more than eighty kilometres an hour.

On its high rock in the mouth of the gorge, Klis was an impregnable fortress, secure against everything save famine or treachery. Even against artillery it would be a formidable barrier. Range after range of ramparts encircle the hill, till they culminate in the citadel on the summit. Nowadays there is a road to the outer gate. A few years ago it was not only impregnable, but wellnigh unapproachable.

I was travelling with the director of Adriatic Tourism, Jerko Ćulić, at whose charming house in Firule I had already found real welcome and hospitality, and some other friends. As we walked slowly upwards, through gate after gate, towards the citadel, he spoke of Petar Kružić and his heroic defence of Klis.

On the summit there was a fresh, cool breeze, which was doubly pleasant after the closeness of the summer air at Salona. Like a magician, Mr. Ćulić conjured up from somewhere or other jugs of cool wine and platefuls of wine-dark Dalmatian ham, a table and chairs. We sat there, looking out over the enormous panorama. Behind us was the pass to Sinj, a narrow channel between bare mountains; before us, the gorge widened and broadened until it lost itself in the fertile plain of the Splitsko polje and the Riviera of the Seven Castles. A little to the left was Split itself and the wooded hillside park of Marijan. Then the new harbour works and Vranjić, like a tiny Venice in the centre of the bay. Then the trout-filled Jader and the ruins of Salona, and, beyond them, the fertile villages of the Seven Castles and distant Trogir. Immediately below was the village of Klis, towards which a tiny train was climbing stertorously. While, far out to sea, stretched the islands. One could see an incredible distance; beyond Čiovo and Brač and rosemary-scented

Šolta to Hvar and even, vaguely perceived, far-distant Vis. It was a view that surpassed all superlatives.

The grim ramifications of the fortress itself are full of an awesome and sombre charm. But time has softened their outlines and filled the crannies with wild rosemary, sweet-smelling salvia, and lavender. On the very summit is a church, that was once a Turkish mosque, but the minaret has gone. In the citadel are rooms, used until a few years ago as prisons for political prisoners. The windows, if one may use such a term for wide stone embrasures, were unbarred. I climbed on the sill of one and looked down. Bars were unnecessary. Below was a sheer rock-wall of four or five hundred feet.

Mr. Čulić wishes to restore the fortress and to make it a resort for tourists and the people of Split on hot summer days. He explained his methods, and they were good. Thank goodness, he will control the work. For he is a man of great taste and sensibility. Klis will be a perfect place for a little restaurant and quiet walks and talks of an evening, and he will in no way spoil its majesty and grandeur.

Nevertheless I was glad to be there once more while it is still deserted and serene.



## VIII

### CITY OF PIRATES: OMIŠ

I HAVE important letters to write. But nothing seems very important in Dalmatia. There is always some good reason for putting things off. I am sitting in a café on the seafront at Omiš, the first of my excursions from Split. A boat like a Liburnian galley, descendant of the ancient pirates, is entering the harbour, and I have stopped everything to look at it and to wonder how any one can possibly live in a little house half-way up the great stone rampart of the Biokovo.

Omiš was a pirate stronghold. But all the pirates have gone now: or perhaps they have all turned hotel-keepers or taxi-drivers in Dubrovnik. But it doesn't matter. They have left their mark on Omiš, which is doubtless more comfortable for their absence.

Those villages, for instance. The older ones are far up on the hillside, out of reach of the pirate raids, with watch-towers to give the alarm. Only the fortified towns, or the more recent settlements, are on the seashore. Omiš itself, for example. No one dared to attack it. The Venetians spent many millions of ducats in an attempt to dislodge them, and a Senator remarked that she would willingly pay as many more to have kept her fingers unburnt. After the Neretljani, the people of Omiš were the most famous sea-robbers, under the Kačić family. They played the racketeers' game too, exacting protection money from Kotor and Split and Dubrovnik to let their ships pass in peace. There are several treaties of the twelfth century to prove the fact; and in 1221 the Pope himself preached a holy war against them for plundering the ships of the Crusaders. Only in 1444 were they forced to yield to the Venetians, as the last independent city of Dalmatia.

Omiš was always a pirate town. She had little trade and little truck with the trappings of nobility. In the whole city I could only see one coat of arms, and that the bishop's. I asked the parish priest how he reconciled bishops with piracy, but he merely shrugged his shoulders and remarked that they had different ideals in the Middle Ages. Their clergy, too, were a tough lot. They used the cryptic Bosnian script up to the early nineteenth century, and were not free from suspicion of the Bosnian heresy. We might say of them today that they had leanings towards Bolshevism. The priest showed me a magnificent silver-gilt Italian thirteenth-century ostensorium. Probably plunder!

They chose their site well. For, though Omiš today is a pleasant little place of tree-shaded avenues, it lies at the mouth of the Cetina gorge, where all the pirate fleets of the world might lie secure. On the rocks above are grim ruins of castles and watch-towers, but the streets today seem more distinguished by the astonishingly large percentage of pretty girls. Altogether a pleasant place.

I decided to see this fearsome canyon, which so impressed Fortis when he went up it to see the Gubavica falls. They are harnessed now to an electric power-station, but the transmission wires and the road through the gorge have done little to lessen its grandeur.

I followed the road along the quay, which was strewn with drying chrysanthemums. The Dalmatian chrysanthemum produces pyrethrum, whence is prepared one of the most potent bug-powders in the world. However, as far as Omiš is concerned, it is an export trade!

The road turns abruptly into the gorge. It was very still and quite deserted. Across the river was a tiny church and two or three cottages, but no sign of inhabitants. There was not a sound, save the tinkle of a distant waterfall from a great height and the croaking of innumerable frogs, treble and bass answering one another in

antiphony. A little farther on were rich water-meadows, unapproachable save by boat, and huge masses of bright purple flowers, of which I do not know the name. I carried some of them about with me for days, but when at last I met a knowledgeable botanist, they were already beyond hope of identification.

There are six kilometres of navigable river here, almost inaccessible save by sea before the road was built. No pirates could have found a better haven.

A little farther along the Cetina is the Poljice. This little mountain region was for many centuries an independent republic. It was still independent at the time Fortis writes, and he was one of the few foreigners to visit it. I cannot resist quoting some of his long and interesting description of their government and customs:

'The Government of this little republic has something singular in it; and deserves to be known. Three orders or ranks of persons compose the whole body of the people, consisting of about fifteen thousand. Twenty families pretend that they are descended from noble Hungarians', i.e. Croats, not Magyars, 'who in turbulent times had taken refuge in these parts. Another larger number of families boast that they are nobles of Bosnia, and the rest are the commonalty of peasants. Every year, on St. George's day, the Poglizans hold their diet, which they call Zbor . . . where they chuse new magistrates or confirm the old ones. The Veliki Knes, or great Count, is the first dignity of the state, and is always chosen from the noble Hungarian families. . . . It happens but seldom that the great Count is chosen without violence, because there is generally more than one candidate. In that case, after having canvassed the votes underhand, one of the boldest partisans lays hold of the box containing the privileges of the community, which is the deposit annually committed to the care of the great Count: he runs with the box towards the house of him

for whom he is engaged, and every member of the diet has a right to pursue him with stones, knives and fire-arms; and many make use of their right to its full extent. If the man takes his measures well, and gets safe to the house proposed with the box, the great Count is duly elected, and none dares make further opposition.'

Incidentally to my earlier remarks about the Slavonic gods, Fortis mentions that 'the shepherds of Pogliza have a particular devotion for St. Vito', and also mentions a Pirun Dubrava or Grove of Perun. Possibly in these villages they retained many pagan rites. The Neretljani were pagans long after the rest of the Slavs were 'converted', and the people of the Poljice resembled them in many respects.

There is a Vidova Gora also on the island of Brač, whither I went next day. Conformant to so great a saint or deity—have it which way you will—it is the highest point on the island, and there was almost certainly a grove there at one time.

Brač is the largest of the islands of Dalmatia and one of the most charming. Doubtless it has a long history, but little is known of it. Pliny mentions the excellence of its goats, 'capris laudata Brattia', and Fortis the excellence of its wines and cheese. Near Splitska the foundations of a third-century basilica have recently been found. That is about all.

I arrived at Sumartin on Brač on the eve of Corpus Christi. It lies at the extreme southern end of the island in a sheltered bay, with a most magnificent view over the Biokovo. It is so small that it is scarcely mentioned in the guide-books, but a leading citizen is building there a comfortable modern hotel which will be open next season (1939). I looked for a room at the Sailor's Inn, with anchors in white pebbles picked out on the paths. The hostess said she had one, and promptly disappeared. I waited, growing hungrier and hungrier. Finally, I could stand no more, but decamped to the opposition inn, the

Sarajevo, where I found a good room and good food, as well as good company.

It was lucky that I did so. For my window overlooked the quay, where tomorrow's procession was to pass. The whole village was in eager preparation; maybe my dilatory hostess had been thus preoccupied. The smiling step-daughter of my present host was storing sacks of sweet-smelling broom flowers in the corridor, and all that night I slept in their heavy odour as if drugged.

Early next morning I was awakened by the chatter of girls under my window. The quay was strewn from end to end with yellow blossoms, forming a thick flowery carpet. All the fishing boats were lined up along the quay, and their masters were decorating them with flowers and green leaves. Just below the church a decorated temporary altar had been put up and the space before it cleared to allow of an inscription in flowers: Zdravo, tilo Isusa. Hail, Body of Jesus. Everywhere girls were lugging baskets deep with golden blooms and scattering them right and left as if for a feast of Ceres.

About half-past ten the bells of the monastery began to ring, and the quay emptied of all save the flower-girls. Every one else, in their best dresses, were going to the church. Alas, there is no longer a national costume on Brač!

The fishermen had finished decorating their boats and were now occupied in placing their nets along the edge of the quay, with the main trawls stretched across the pathway of the procession, in the form of a rude cross. Might they, too, be blessed by the Sacred Body of Christ.

About eleven the procession left the church, to an almost deafening clangour of bells. They halted before the temporary altar and then moved slowly onwards, chanting, along the quay. There was bustle among the fishing-boats. As the Sacrament passed by, they, too, swung from their mooring and, gaily decorated with the great fishing-lamps brightly lit, followed the procession

along the water's edge. I am in no way religious, but the whole scene was deeply moving. At last they slowly passed out of sight into the village, leaving behind them the heavy scent of incense and crushed broom.

Mr. Čulić was to meet me that afternoon at Povelje, a village a few kilometres away. I asked how I was to get there, as the road was long and there were no conveyances in Sumartin. How far would it be over the crest of the hill? Only some eight or ten kilometres. Very well, I would walk.

That walk was one of the most difficult and most beautiful of my life. Brač does not show her most attractive side to the sea. The shores are bare and rocky, with scarcely a trace of vegetation, save in the sheltered bays where are the villages. The winter bora sees to that.

But away from the exposed seashore it is different. The paths are narrow and made of rough stone that tears the very soul out of one's boots. One's feet suffer, but one's heart is filled with colour and gaiety. It was the better that day for there was no one in the fields, and the only sign of man was a hydroplane zooming overhead. Bright green lizards were sunning themselves on the hot stones, to vanish, with quivering tails, at my approach. The stone walls themselves were bright with yellow broom and the peculiarly rich velvety red of the pomegranate blossom. The fields were either laid out in drill-room vineyards, or with the gruesome contortions of the olives, the one looking like new recruits training for some war, the other like aged veterans bent and twisted by its service. The fat bulbous figs seemed aggressively conscious of their fruitfulness, like the figures in Botticelli's *Primavera*. Sometimes I came to a patch of raw stone, with only the inevitable rosemary and salvia to give it life. Then I would crush the leaves in my hand and walk on, refreshed by their fragrance. And sometimes, on the right, I would look down at some sheltered sea-cove, blue and still.

I hurried. The boat I was to meet was due at five, and I have a hearty distrust of peasant time estimates when it is a matter of cross-country walking. There was no one to ask how far I was from Povelje, and no house or village by the way. So at last, when the hillside fell away before me down to the shining white tops of the village, it was only a quarter past three. I believe that I established a record.

Those roofs were fascinating. They were made of stone slabs of such dazzling whiteness that, in the height of summer, they seemed snow-covered. I have only seen them at Povelje and the next village to it, Pučišće.

I scrambled down the precipitous alleys of the village to the quay, hot and tired. There were a knot of peasants and sailors, playing boce. Knowing that there was no inn at Povelje, I threw myself on their mercy, and was soon enabled to get outside of a jug of wine. Then I sat down to wait and, later, to take a hand in the game and chat with an old sailor who had been in most corners of the globe and had a smattering of most languages. Now he was smitten with the idea of a universal language:

'I am trying to learn Esperanto in my old days. But it is such a beastly language; rather like a gelded Spanish.'

Ćulić arrived by boat a couple of hours later. He had business in Povelje, which is trying to develop as a tourist resort. There is no reason why it shouldn't, for it has a lovely situation and a good place. But, at present, it has no accommodation, and we decided to return to Sumartin for the night. I was too tired to walk back, so we looked for horses and found one mule, Gala, and one donkey, Krešo. So we set out via Selca by 'Brač express'.

Now I am a very bad rider, and Krešo was a very bad donkey. He kept lagging behind the placid Gala, and every time my peasant tried to stir him up, which was every two minutes, he kicked.

Selca is a village of stonemasons. The quarries of Brač have been famous since the earliest times. Diocle-

tian's palace is built of Brač stone, and Trogir Cathedral, and many public buildings all over the world. It possesses the curious quality of coming straight from the quarries in a workable state and slowly hardening on contact with the air.

It is therefore a solidly built place, with many fine houses; one had almost said palaces, save that the place has no nobility, nor, with one or two doubtful exceptions, ever had. A very large percentage of the inhabitants are the descendants of an individual stone-cutter who should really have been an assistant after the Flood, so much has he increased and multiplied. The most striking building is an enormous unfinished church, made by the local stonemasons of their famous local stone. It is grandiose but not inspired. If it is ever completed, it will be able to shelter eighteen hundred worshippers, roughly speaking the entire population of the village.

These men of Brač have, in general, a wide conception. Some years ago, when the local council decided to have a park, it was suggested that it should be dedicated to Josip Štrosmajer, the great Croat bishop and Yugoslav patriot. But the people of Brač had even wider ideas. They dedicated their park to Tolstoy, as the great apostle of all-Slav union, and his statue is still there. It is a pity that present politics have tended to narrow this wide stream into a petty local channel.

But I cannot describe all the charming villages of Brač. I would like to linger at Milna, where the Sargo inheritance wrought such turmoil, or at Sutivan, where I stumbled in the dark through a seventeenth-century oil-press, or at Nerezi, once the residence of the counts, or at Bol; but the largest and most interesting place on the island is Supetar. Thither we went next morning, in the teeth of a maestral, with the sea a beautiful dark blue, flecked with white, and the sun rising glorious behind the Biokovo; that is if you can call it rising, for it is already high in the sky before its first rays top that terrific rampart.



Supetar is one of the best places in Dalmatia to recommend to a visitor who wants company, but not too much of it, who wants reasonable comfort without undue luxury, who has not too much money at disposal, and who desires rest without solitude. It is clean and comfortable and picturesque. And Split is only an hour away by boat. Also, it makes a special and agreeable type of rakija, out of green walnuts.

But I could not linger, though I would have liked. Instead I had come for a special reason; Supetar was the native town of the Petranović family, some of whom emigrated to Chile and made there an incredible fortune. In fact the careers of some of the Yugoslav emigrants, like the Petranoviés or the Mihanoviés, read like success-stories of the *n*th degree. Here, too, they are buried; and their mausoleum is one of the most beautiful works of art in the entire world. This I can say with sincerity and conviction. It stands in the little cypress-planted graveyard, a few feet from the sea, and is the work of the great Yugoslav sculptor, Toma Rosandić.

Every part of this marvellous tomb is a work of art, filled with piety and poetic truth. From the mourning angel, with wings folded over bent back and bowed head, on the top of the building, down to the corbels and brackets, every detail is perfect. The mausoleum itself is of white Brač stone while the angel and the gates are of bronze.

The angel mourns, yet it is not the mourning of despair, while the figure of St. Michael calls those within to a glorious resurrection. There is the pity and the compassion of death, without its terror and without its fear. These dead are waiting too, but they wait in hope and without suspense.

The bronze gates are the most lovely things of their kind I have ever seen. On them the legions of good strive for the souls of the dead with those of evil, but in their triumphant trumpets one sees ultimate victory.

To my mind, it is a far greater work than the more famous Račić mausoleum by Ivan Meštrović at Cavtat. Here there is none of the tortured striving that mars Meštrović's work. Yet it is odious to make such comparisons. For Meštrović is essentially epic. The spirit of the Yugoslav epics, which he has so perfectly translated into stone, fills his work with vigour, force, and heroism. Looking at it, one hears the sound of trumpets and of warriors shouting for battle. Rosandić is lyric. His sculpture is pure lyrical form, and almost sensuous beauty that makes one look and look again. The trumpets sounding here are the trumpets of the resurrection, calling to eternal life; Meštrović would have made them the trumpets of the judgment. In Rosandić's work are all the tones of the orchestra, including the soft wail of the violins and the delicate filigree of the wood-wind. One leaves Meštrović's mausoleum almost stunned; one leaves Rosandić's with a feeling of compassionate exaltation.

## IX

### THE ISLAND OF WINE: VIS

A COMBINATION of curiosity and gluttony led me to Vis. For the wines of Vis are as famous today throughout Yugoslavia as they were throughout the polite world in classical times. 'In Lissa (Vis), an island of the Adriatic, says Agatharchis, there grows a wine which, compared with any other, exceeds it in goodness.'

That, of course, was long before phylloxera days, but the heat and stones of Vis have even tamed the American vine to excellence. Indeed, on the tiny island of Biševo, opposite the village of Komiža on Vis, the old vines still exist. It was the only place in Dalmatia, perhaps in Europe, where the dreaded plague did not come. But its small production is scarcely enough to satisfy both islanders and connoisseurs.

It is a wonder, really, that the phylloxera should ever have reached Vis itself. For it is the most distant of the Adriatic islands, far out in a sea that has long turned from shore green to deep Adria blue. From the shore it can only be rarely seen from great heights, such as Klis.

I went first to Komiža, which lies on the west of the island, sheltered from the open Adriatic by the little island of Biševo. It is not a tourist centre; indeed, there is but one small hotel, and that of no special merit. It is, firstly and foremostly, a fishing village and a large one. The whole air has an indefinable odour of fresh sardines, which is not unpleasant, and there are five canning factories. The typical landscape has always a half-dozen or so nets drying in the sun. Those who are not engaged in fishing or in the factories or vineyards are either making or mending nets, and the place is as full of contented cats as Baška.

The rocky shores of Vis itself are good fishing grounds, and those of Biševo and Sv. Andrija still better. But best of all are the rocky islets of Sušac and Pelargosa, far out in the Adriatic. Pelargosa today is uninhabited, save for an automatic lighthouse, if that may be classed as an inhabitant. Furthermore, it is nominally Italian, but treaties have secured the rights of Vis to fish along its shores. At one time, when the fishing season opened, the harbour of Komiža presented a strange sight. As many as seventy fishing vessels would line up across the harbour and, at a sign from the harbour-master, race the seventy-odd kilometres to Pelargosa, rowing night and day to get the choicest places for the coming season. It was no child's play, for competition was severe and the boats heavy and clumsy. But the prizes were large, for who got the best position held it for the rest of the season. Today the ceremony has fallen into disuse, partly because of the use of motor vessels and partly because there are fewer competitors and therefore plenty of room for all.

Komiža is a friendly place. I arrived there totally unknown, and within three hours had found a company of congenial fellow-spirits. We met before the café of the 'Battle of Vis', named in memory of the great defeat of the Italians by the Austrian admiral Tegethoff, whose fleet was mainly manned by Dalmatians. One of them offered to show me round the town, while we all arranged to meet that evening for fish and wine.

Naturally our first visit was to a sardine factory. It was not one of the largest, but there were a hundred and forty girls at work of all ages, from lovely young creatures of fifteen or sixteen to withered hags of indefinite age. But all were singing gaily as they worked. The local songs of the island; 'schlagers', have not yet reached Komiža.

Komiža, as it is today, is largely modern, but there are still one or two ancient buildings of interest. The

town-hall is an uncomfortable and ugly building of 1585, but the main church of the town is more interesting. It bears the curious title of 'Our Lady of the Pirates', and is really three churches combined into one, which makes it far more broad than long. It contains a wonder-working portrait of the Virgin, which was once stolen by pirates. But every time they attempted to row past the harbour point the power of the picture held them back, till at last they threw it into the sea and were free to go. The picture returned to its place in the church, which was enlarged in honour of the miracle. Was the miracle invented to account for the name, or the name chosen to give credence to the miracle? It would be interesting to know. For in the original Croat form it appears that Our Lady herself was the pirate!

Another church in the town has a more explicable miracle, in the form of a complicated mechanism invented by an ingenious priest for revealing and elevating the Sacrament without apparent human aid. But now everyone in Komiža knows the secret, and it only amazes the countrywomen who come to see it on the rare occasions when it is still used. In this church was once a relic still more wonderful to the faithful, the head of Jesus Himself!

It was a pity that it was too late to go to Biševo. The sea there is so clear that the fishermen say one can see the bottom at fourteen fathoms, and there is a blue grotto there even more intricately beautiful than that of Capri. From such a cavern might Thetis have been born.

The island of Vis was indeed an important Greek colony of Syracusans, Issa. Perhaps it has, indeed, added its quota to mythology. For the Biševo grotto is worthy of the most beautiful legends of the sea-nymphs, while a little way away is the solitary rock needle of Jabuka, which is composed almost entirely of natural iron so that it may well be the loadstone-mountain that played such havoc with the mariners of Sindbad. I would have liked, too, to see the Abbey church founded there in the ninth

century, and to have tasted the Blue Grotto prošek from the old vines.

But I was content enough to wander through the village, watching the fishermen at work. In one sheltered corner a group of strong young men, stripped to the waist, were sledging at some green herb whose juice is said to preserve nets. The pungent aromatic smell filled the air.

It is by smells that the memory is most strongly moved. Perhaps the comparative disuse of that sense makes its occasional joggings of the memory sharper and more poignant than those of sight and hearing. At any rate, I shall never again smell that pungent herb or fresh sardines without seeing a clear-cut picture of nets drying on the foreshore of Komiza; even as the smell of crushed mint brings back memories of Kaštel Stari fifteen years ago, or burning pine-cones a still clearer picture of a summer evening on the Baltic or nights in the Canadian woods longer ago than I care to recall. While other and less pleasant smells recall only too clearly the little town of Leucas in Greece, quite the most complicated collection of stinks I have ever experienced.

The price of fish is low these days. But the Komiza fishermen have compensated somewhat for their losses by forming a Co-operative for lobsters and other shell-fish, which always fetch a good price in Belgrade or the tourist resorts. They keep them in a huge concrete basin, roofed over with boards, so that it is always cool and dark like the sea-caves that these creatures love. One circulates in this murky grot in a little boat, picking out enormous lobsters, crayfish, or spider-crabs with a net, while the two 'guardian-dogs' race frantically up and down the planks a foot or so above one's head, filling the place with clangour.

I like also to recall that evening in Komiza, though, I am ashamed to say, our merrymaking resulted in several protests being lodged next day at the municipality. There

were seven of us, led by a Slovene schoolmaster who, like all Slovenes, was a lover of wine, and found Komiža a place after his heart. I was a foreigner. The others islanders.

Our feast was simple. It consisted of several litres of pure old Vugava wine from the local vineyards, dark golden yellow in colour and fourteen degrees in strength, 'quod non corrumpit malitia hominum'. The only food was a strudel of salted sardines, a speciality of Vis, which satisfied the tummy but increases the thirst. We found a piano, a 'cello, and a violin, and made such music as Komiža rarely heard.

The schoolmaster was a disciple of Freud. 'I need it,' he said, 'for my work.'

I asked him why. Surely no one in Komiža has complexes?

'It's the Jugo (south wind),' he said. 'When that blows they are all mad here, even the schoolchildren. I can do nothing with them.'

I told him that, as far as I had read Freud, he offered no cure for 'mass hysterical phenomena induced by atmospheric disturbances', but he continued his request until the conversation was entirely monopolized by Bacchus and Orpheus, and at last subsided.

That wine was really good. We got to bed at three, and I rose next morning at seven with a clear head, to keep an appointment at Vis. Remembering my experience with Krešo, I chose a mule for my journey across the island, and a good steady beast he was. There is a road and a bus service, but I wanted to see a circular church which lies off the road and might have been old Croatian. A peasant was waiting below with my animal.

As we rode slowly up the path above Komiža, through the rocky terraces where the famous vines are cultivated, I felt a sense of peace and of satisfaction. For good wine, as well as strong emotion, can sometimes produce a mental as well as physical catharsis. Komiža lay stretched



KOMIŽA





out before us in the lovely semicircle of its harbour, with Biševo beyond. I felt a pang of regret at leaving. I had made good friends there in a short time. We halted on the crest of the hill and looked back for a few silent moments.

My companion began discussing with me his way of life and his family budget. My mule-hire would be a godsend to him. It was simple enough. If the price of a kilo of bread equalled that of a kilo of fish or a litre of wine, then the year was good; if not, then it was hard. This year wine and fish were cheap and bread a little dearer. It was not yet a bad year, but it was not an easy one. He described his work, spraying all day in the vineyards and rowing or fishing all night. Sometimes he would fall asleep at the oar. He envied some of the peasants who had found a special kind of sand in one of the many grottoes of the island that was suitable for grinding glass, and were making a good thing out of it.

We stopped near my church for wine, and I went to investigate. But there was nothing of special interest about it, save that it was circular. I would hazard myself that it was merely a converted watch-tower. In another hour we had entered Vis.

Vis has played a considerable part in British history, and the forts around the harbour still bear English names. There is also an English graveyard and an English consulate, the latter for no apparent reason save to look after the graveyard. During the Continental System of Napoleon, the British seized Vis and Korčula and made them centres for the export of British goods to Central Europe and Germany via Bosnia and Croatia. The island grew rich under this smugglers' regime, and doubled in population. In 1811 the French admiral Dubordieu attempted to drive the British from Vis, but was thoroughly defeated by a smaller British force under Hoste. We held the island until 1815, when it was handed over to Austria.

That was but one of the many naval battles fought near Vis, the 'Adriatic Gibraltar'. But that which most impressed the people was the great victory of Tegethoff in 1866. During the Italian occupation of 1918-1921, the Italians took away the Lion of Vis which commemorated their defeat, but this piece of stone was merely a symbol, and the memory remains.

There is a general air of well-being about Vis, which is a tidy little city of stone houses grouped around the magnificent harbour. The impression is a little spoiled by the erection of a hideous Orthodox church in concrete, which does not match the landscape, and merely mocks the beautiful Serbo-Byzantine style. It was erected by some trick of political jobbery, and, as there are practically no worshippers, it could be pulled down with profit. An interesting feature of Vis is the nursery for palms and tropical plants, which grow here in the open air and are exported to all parts of Dalmatia.

. . . . .

From Vis I went to the island of Korčula, intending thence to make for Metković and, eventually, Dubrovnik. But instead of going directly, I preferred to land at Vela Luka on the northern end of the island, and thence cross the island by bus.

Vela Luka is beautiful, but not particularly interesting. It has a lovely plage and a wide sheltered harbour, ideal for sailing, as well as reasonably comfortable hotels, and should develop, as it hopes to do, into a very pleasant tourist centre. After all, every one is not grubbing for antiquities, and Vela Luka has all the other qualities that the visitor demands. I liked the practical broad-brimmed straw hats of the peasant women and the smiling faces of the young people. But they are not musical! In the Sokol House I heard a bassoon playing in one key against two trumpets in another; the harmony would have startled even Stravinski.

The road to Korčula leads through fields fertile for stony Dalmatia to Blato, a large village famous for its folk-dance, the Kumpanija. It is stone-built and rather primitive with eyeless houses in severe rows. Yet it is rather impressive in its simplicity, and the air is heavy with the sweet scent of lindens.

Thence through scanty forests of stone-pine to real forest country, where the road winds along the edge of precipitous cliffs, with forest behind and blue sea below, to Korčula. It is a magnificent run and well worth the taking.

Korčula is an ancient and a very beautiful city, with narrow cool stone streets and open shady parks. On it the Venetians have set their mark as nowhere else in Dalmatia. The lion of St. Mark is everywhere to be seen. But, as usual, he has set his paw on many earlier buildings.

It was also famous for its stonemasons, who have made the city beautiful. Some of the former houses of the nobility are among the most lovely in Dalmatia, especially those of the Arneri and Lanzi families. The still more famous family of Polo came from here. It was doubtless his Italian blood that gave Marco his quick perception and skill in intrigue; but perhaps we may credit his love of wandering in the far places of the earth to his sea-borne native city of Dalmatia. There are still a few Polos in the city.

These stonemasons have not lost their medieval skill. There is a delightful little fountain here, supported by bulbous frogs, which is really charming, and was erected only a few years ago.

Yes, Korčula is ancient, but not as ancient as the famous Antenor inscription makes her. This states that Korčula arose out of the ashes of burning Troy, but it is well-known that it was erected in the sixteenth century. Yet another inscription records the gratitude of the citizens to their English governor, for Korčula was in English

hands at the same time as Vis and enjoyed under English rule a measure of self-government which she had not known since the days of Korkyra Malaina—and has not known since.

Korčula also has a cathedral. It is not, perhaps, so beautiful as those of Šibenik or Trogir, but it is most extraordinarily interesting. In general design it is a simple large-scale Dalmatian church, but it has been decorated with stone carvings in the most perfect taste that give a curious sense of appliqué work; especially if one compares the elaborate façade with the severe simplicity of the back and sides. On each side of the main portal, representing once again the entry into Paradise, are Adam and Eve, on this occasion not so discreet, as they are both squatting in what I believe is known as the 'frog-position'. On the elaborate cornice are strange beasts in stone, including the famous elephants which, however, are so conventionally carved that it is not easy to recognize them. There has been a lot of controversy about these beasts. Probably they were wrought to the designs of South Italian masters, who in turn had copied from the Saracens. It would be a fascinating idea to connect them with Marco Polo and his stories of the East, which many believed for long to have been mere travellers' tales, but there is unfortunately no evidence to enable one to do so.

There is some very fine carving inside the cathedral also, especially on the columns and the stone badalquin of the main altar. But perhaps the most interesting thing is a fine Byzantine ikon and several other pictures strongly influenced by the Byzantine school. This Byzantine influence in Dalmatian art would be a good theme for some student of art. There was a long period of Byzantine political influence here, as well as a certain amount of give and take between the two churches, and many articles were plundered by the Dalmatian sea-robbers. Also, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many

Greek artists took refuge in Dalmatia. Among them was, for a time, Domenico Theotocopuli, later famous as El Greco.

I was, unfortunately, too early to see the knightly games of the Moreška, which take place on the patronal feast of St. Theodor, on June 29th each year. Their origin is uncertain; local tradition assigns it to the brief period of Genoese rule between 1100 and 1129. The name means 'Moorish', and the subject is a struggle between Moors and Ottomans. The Black King Moro, with his followers dressed in black, in parody of Moorish dress, snatch from the Ottoman Sultan Osman his betrothed, Bula (this word in Serb still means a veiled Turkish woman). Their followers fight and then themselves in single combat, Bula frantically intervening to save her beloved. With the final victory of Osman, the lovers are again united. The dances are rapid and rhythmical, requiring much skill and long training. In the fight scenes a novice might well receive a nasty blow. They fight each with two swords, striking and parrying with extraordinary speed and precision; and these are no feigned blows. It is an interesting and exciting performance, well worth the seeing.

Opposite Kočula, across a narrow strait, is the rocky peninsula of Pelješac, also famous for its wines. This time the highest summit is not dedicated to Vid; but it is to St. Ilija, the successor of Perun the Thunderer. On Pelješac are some of the most charming smaller seaside resorts of Dalmatia, Viganj, Kučiste, and Orebić, but I had no chance to visit them. I should have liked to do so, for I heard of an ethnographical problem there that interested me. The people about Viganj are known locally as Firauni, otherwise Pharaohs, and their three villages are named Viganj (bellows), Nadkovan (anvil), and Kovačevići (smiths). Surely this means a gypsy settlement, who have forgotten their origin? For the smith's in the Balkans is a gypsy trade, and even now,

in England and elsewhere the gypsies are sometimes known as Pharaohs.

Nor was I able to stop at Makarska. Somehow Makarska has always eluded me. I have passed through it at least a dozen times and have watched it—from the ship—grow from a little town of no particular importance to one of the most popular and fashionable resorts in Dalmatia, rivalling Rab and Crikvenica. Its bay is beautiful, and its situation, at the foot of the Biokovo, magnificent. More I cannot say.

This time I went straight on down the Neretljanski Kanal to Metković. Thence I went to South Serbia, but of that more in its proper place.

From now on, my old friend and travelling companion Fortis begins to desert me. For we are now approaching the territory of the former Republic of Dubrovnik, which was an independent state in Fortis's time and not under Venetian control. Pelješac was a part of its territory, and Fortis did not cross the frontier.

The estuary of the Neretva is little known to tourists. In pre-war times it had a bad reputation for malaria, which it no longer deserves. Furthermore, though it has a certain melancholy beauty of its own, it is not cheerful, and there are no tourist centres near. Also, it is well off the track of the usual passenger lines. Only those on business or bound for the railhead, as I was, go there: who else would go to Metković?

Its complicated creeks and marshy lakes were the home of the Narentines, the Neretljani, both before and after the coming of the Slavs the most ferocious pirates of the earlier ages, from Roman times until the Turkish conquest. Even then a large number of them under the Vlatković family refused to submit to the Turks and moved to the northern coastlines, where they became the ancestors of the brave but bloodthirsty Uskoks. Incidentally, they remained pagan long after the conversion of the other Slavs.

I climbed on to the bridge to look at the chart. It was a pre-war one, showing the course of the river winding through desolate and detestable marshy lagoons and salt-marshes. But, though still much remains to be done, the district has improved immensely. The salt-marshes of the chart are now rich and fertile fields, and, indeed, the valley and estuary of the Neretva, when all the reclamation work is done, will be able to grow enough to feed all hungry Dalmatia.

An even more ambitious project is now in hand, namely to extend the road and railway from Metković down to the seashore at the village of Ploče, and thereby eliminate entirely the long and costly journey to Metković. The road is almost ready, and the railway soon will be, but it will still be some years before the new port is ready.

I have not by me a history of Metković. But surely all this plain and all these marshy lakes are comparatively recently formed, probably by the silt carried down by the swift-flowing Neretva. For the famous Roman city of Naronā is not far from modern Metković, on a site which no one but a lunatic would choose for a city today. Certainly the landscape has changed from Roman times.

Some way from the entrance we could see the typical bright green waters of the Neretva mingling with the sea water. Probably all this first part of the canal is recently formed land; all the way indeed until Komin and Opužen, where bare karst hills come down to the river's edge. It makes a curious contrast; on one side hills scarred and pock-marked, as bare of vegetation as an ice-floe, and on the other wide stretches of yellow wheat and dark-green tobacco.

Somewhere in these lagoons the pelicans breed. Or so say the guide-books. But no one whom I know has ever seen one. Nor had the captain. Indeed, a wonderful bird is the pelican.

Of Metković, the least said the better. It is not an interesting town, and lies between two worlds. There is no more good Dalmatian wine, and not yet good Bosnian coffee.



## X

### DUBROVNIK

**D**UBROVNIK is undoubtedly the pearl of the Adriatic, but like all pearls it has a great price. In the season it is more expensive, and its people more rapacious than any other place in Dalmatia. Therefore I stayed there only a short time. I love Dubrovnik, and have been there many times, but I will choose a winter visit for description.

It was the day of St. Vlaho, the patron saint of the republic. Dubrovnik was dressed up for the occasion. There were garlands on the church of St. Vlaho itself and all the other churches of this pious town. The Stradun, the main street between the upper and lower city gates, was pricked out in electric lights strung along the even roofs of the houses. At the Pile gate, the old drawbridge over the city moat, long abandoned to a wilderness of oleanders, had been repaired and was to be raised on its ancient counterweights after the bishop's blessing in the afternoon.

The whole city was en fête. At five o'clock I had been wakened, or rather stunned, out of a heavy sleep by the roar of cannon firing a salute to the saint from the fortress of Lovrijenac. Even at that early hour the market was busy and the streets thronged with people. There were peasant girls from the Konavle, in black dresses with bright patches of embroidery at neck and throat, and little pork-pie hats. There were islanders in baggy blue breeches and waistcoats of gold and silver braid, with broad sashes half concealing the hilts of ancient swords and pistols, and every other kind of national costume from the territories of the former republic. Two bands perambulated the city at intervals. Flags hung from

every window. On the Pile Gate, on Lovrijenac, on the Orlando column in front of St. Vlaho, floated the white standard of the saint, under which the people of Dubrovnik had fought and traded for almost a thousand years.

I had arrived the day before the feast, by the little train which wanders for twenty-four hours up and down the Bosnian mountains on its way from Belgrade. In the morning I had strolled once again through the narrow streets of the city, like a cat in a new home, trying to get once again the spirit of this ancient city. I had avoided the wiles of at least a dozen persons who, seeing my pipe, wanted to show me exactly what King Edward had done and where. Finally, I had enjoyed a well-cooked bronzino in a side-street restaurant, where a bushy bunch of twigs over the door proclaimed, as in the Middle Ages, that good wine was sold within.

Dubrovnik has not changed much. Inside the circuit of the walls it has probably not changed much since the disastrous earthquake of 1667, which gave the city much of its present form. But it is always fascinating, especially to those who know the history of its famous argosies. Every street recalls a name of one of those proud merchant-nobles who ruled this, the most advanced and cultured republic of Europe outside Italy for many centuries. One was named after the famous Ragusan cardinal, Ilija Saraka.

Probably the only change of note has been the building of the Gradska Kafana in the old building between the lovely Palace of the Rectors and the Medieval Mint. But the exterior has scarcely changed, and the orchestra still plays under the massive arches of the former harbour. It has become the regular rendezvous of Dubrovnik, and thither I went.

The city was full for the festival, and a glance round discovered many old acquaintances. I joined a table. The conversation was easy and decorous, sliding smoothly from the intricacies of Dubrovnik history and archi-

ture to the history and charms of the passers-by. It is this ease of manner and lack of self-consciousness which makes up the tradition of Dubrovnik courtesy, the tradition of generations of aristocrats which has now seeped into the spirit of the people.

From where we sat we could look up the brightly-lit Stradun, now lined with a double row of masts decorated with wreaths of purple and orange, the heraldic colours of the city. On each was a shield with a device, the coats of arms of the former vlastelins. It was while we were amusing ourselves trying to pick them out that one of the party said:

'Do you know Ivo Saraka?'

I remembered the street of the cardinal, and asked if he were of the same family. He was. No, I did not know him.

'He has been ill recently and does not come out much,' said my informant. 'But I know him very well. We could go along and see him together.'

I was only too glad. Dubrovnik in summer is a tourist centre, full of gay young people who bathe and boat all day long and dance all night. But Dubrovnik in winter is once again the proud, somewhat reserved, city of the Middle Ages; especially now on the eve of the festival of the patron saint. The Gradska Kafana, modern and echoing with recent song-hits, did not harmonize with this mood.

'All right. Let's go now.'

Saraka's house was in one of the narrow side-streets on the left of the Stradun, where the noble families used to live. This was old Ragusa, and used to be divided from the plebeian quarter of Dubrovnik by a canal which is now the Stradun. Over the doorway was an ancient coat of arms, weathered by age, on which we could still discern the shape of a fish, a pun upon the family name. The huge wrought-iron knocker dated from the times when Dubrovnik locks were famous throughout the Balkans.

We knocked. Despite the hum of the crowds in the Stradun, the side-streets were empty and almost deserted. The noise echoed deafeningly from house to house. Far up on the third floor a single light showed the owner to be at home. We hammered again. This time it seemed that even the dead must wake, and we were rewarded by seeing a flickering light pass downwards across the windows, and at last the sound of footsteps within. The great door opened and an old peasant woman in national costume appeared, with a lamp held high over her head to see the intruders. She recognized my companion and smiled:

‘Come in. Gospar Ivo is upstairs.’

She led the way up the broad stone staircase. The lower floor, as in so many houses of the Dubrovnik aristocracy, had once served as office and storehouse, and the flickering light of the lamp revealed vague shapes of old carved furniture, coffers, and other relics. From the first floor upwards a range of pictures followed the windings of the stair; some allegorical, some ancestors of the Saraka family in robes and chains of office. The old servant lifted the lamp for us to see.

Our host was in the top room of the house, which alone was still in use and somewhat warmer than the dank stone below. He welcomed us gravely and courteously, and we sat down at a heavy walnut table, the weak circle of the lamplight scarcely illuminating our three faces. He has always refused to have electricity installed.

There are certain moments in which, for a few brief minutes, time seems non-existent. We might have been sitting in a Rembrandt picture, save that the faces in the lamplight were of that clear-cut medallion type characteristic of the south, not the victorious pagan south of Tintoretto or Correggio, but the ascetic south of El Greco, who was trained by a Dalmatian. The face of my companion opposite was deeply etched in shadow, every line and wrinkle clearly outlined, while naked cupids and

voluptuous nymphs showed uncertainly around him, when the wick burnt higher, from a painted cabinet behind. He spoke with a strange mixture of deference and familiarity, his hands moving continually. Saraka, at the other end of the table, might have been carved in stone save for the movement of his lips and the occasional flash of his eyes. Only now and again he put his hand to his head. His white expanse of forehead and great hooked nose made him seem like an amiable but aristocratic vulture.

He apologized that he had been ill. The old woman, meanwhile, remained still, with folded hands, in the darkness at the farther end of the room.

He spoke of the past of Dubrovnik and the pride of her nobles, in a broad Ragusan dialect in which the basic Slav was freely mingled with Latin and Italian. His memory was prodigious. I asked him how many of the vlastelin families were left.

'Only six. In my own family, only myself and two cousins.'

'You never married?'

'No. My cousins also are unmarried.'

I thought of the story that the people tell; that when Napoleon's marshal, Marmont, afterwards ennobled almost as if sarcastically Duc de Raguse, had ended for ever the city's long centuries of pride and independence, the noble families had decided to refrain from marriage and thus gradually to disappear, rather than outlive their former glory. But I did not like to ask him directly if such a contract was made. In any case, it does not matter. Whether made or not, it is being carried out.

Most of the noble families have indeed died out, as though they realized that they were no longer in place in this modern striving world, and preferred to leave behind them a fragrant and romantic memory rather than a picture of decadence and decay. The Sorgos are represented only by collateral branches of another name.



GATEWAY OF THE PALACE OF THE RECTORS, DUBROVNIK



The Restis are no more. The Ranjinas, whose poems and plays are among the greatest heritage of Yugoslav literature, can now be traced only in their works or on the great carved coat of arms over the door of their one-time palace. The Ohumučevići, who made most of their fortune in Spain, have also gone. A slab in the Dominican monastery records that a member of their family was an admiral in the Spanish Armada, and whose seamanship in English waters astonished the Spaniards and so annoyed Queen Elizabeth that she wrote furious letters to the Ottoman Sultan that he punish the presumptuous city. The Gondola-Gundulići—almost every Ragusan family had both a Slav and a Latin name—have also died out, though the work of Ivan Gundulić is still read and his statue decorates the public square. Only the Sarakas, the Bonas, the Gozze-Gučetići and one or two others still survive. But they, too, are dying out. And that will be the end.

‘And the feast of St. Vlaho?’

‘It served to hold the republic together. Once a year at least the people saw the city and its power. We nobles encouraged it. We were a close community and kept the rites of Catholicism very strictly. We even maintained a sort of unofficial literary censorship among ourselves. Once, when the Dutch ambassador was here, he refused to kneel to the Host. “I do not believe,” he said, “that that is really the body of Christ.” “And do you think we believe?” answered a noble. “But we kneel, just the same—for the sake of the people.” And the ambassador knelt. No—we were all humanists, platonists. We worshipped Plato—and we lived by Petrarch.

‘Only by keeping the forms and ceremonies strictly could we survive: and by maintaining the power of the nobles. Think of us for a minute; a tiny republic with Venice and the Emperor on the one side, and the Serbs and afterwards the Turks on the other. Do you see that scroll?’ He pointed to a document in Arabic script on



the wall. 'That is the original treaty signed with the Sultan for trading rights, before the Turks entered Europe—in the fourteenth century. That scroll there is the Sultan's toghrul. So, when they came, we were not a country to be conquered, but an allied state. We knew they would come: and we knew they would win. Our secret service was good, the best in the world.'

It was more than an hour later that we made our way down the broad stone staircase to the street outside.

Next day I saw him again. The ceremonies had begun at the unearthly hour of five in the morning with High Mass in the Church of St. Vlaho. At six, the band again paraded the city, and then went to the Ploče gate to welcome the deputations from the eastern villages of the Konavle and then to Pile to welcome those from the west, from Lopud, Ombla, Ston, Pelješac, and the islands. All were in full national costume with magnificent banners, some of them centuries old and thin as wafers. The saluting battery on the Minčeta tower greeted them as they entered the gates to place their standards on the steps of St. Vlaho in front of the Orlando column.

The day before had been overclouded, but St. Vlaho had decided to smile upon his people, for the day of the festa itself was clear and cloudless without even the shape of a man's hand upon the glittering blue surface of the Adriatic. There was only a gentle breeze which made the standards on St. Vlaho float out gently from time to time, displaying their gay colours toned by age.

The greatest feature of the festa was the procession after mass of the relics of St. Vlaho. The square and the Stradun, crowded before, were now so densely packed that it was scarcely possible for the guard of honour to clear a way for the procession. I tried a dozen points of vantage to get a photo, each more difficult to attain than the last. Finally, I settled on the top of the steps of St. Vlaho, standing on the broad stone balustrade to see over the heads of the standard-bearers who, being all

six feet or more, made me feel like Gulliver among the Brobdingnagians.

The procession started from the cathedral, the Gospa, where the statue and relics of St. Vlaho are kept. There are a good many of them. Indeed, once a local paper, more truthful than pious, suggested there were enough to make several originals.

Originally an Armenian bishop of Sebastos who suffered martyrdom in the early fourth century, St. Vlaho, or St. Blaise, became the patron saint of Dubrovnik by one of those singular visitations so common in the Middle Ages, but denied to our present age of little faith. In the tenth century, the Venetians visited Dubrovnik with a huge fleet, half of which anchored off Lokrum and half at Gruž, thus surrounding Dubrovnik from the seaward side. Their professions were friendly, their preparations ominous. But they were well received and even shown the circuit of the walls. Now it chanced that at that time the canon of the cathedral church was a certain Stojko, who often carried on his pious exercises until late in the night. In the midst of his meditations he saw the church around him filled with armed men, and among them an old man of venerable aspect who called him aside. He was, he said, St. Vlaho, bishop and martyr, who had been sent by heaven to guard the city of Dubrovnik. He had himself that night defended the city with his heavenly battalions, but the next night heavenly aid must yield place to earthly, and the city prepare itself for an attack from the seaward side. The pious Stojko warned the Council of Dubrovnik. The treacherous attempt was foiled, and St. Vlaho accepted as patron of the city.

Under a vast canopy held aloft by eight white-robed boys the image of St. Vlaho started on its tour of the town, preceded by gaily decorated priests, carrying portions of the saint in gold and jewelled reliquaries. He must have been a very Siva, as I counted no less than

fourteen arms, but was later informed that these impressive gold cases contain no more than a fraction of finger-nail. The bishop in dalmatic and mitre led the procession with a guard of honour. The air, warm and still, was clouded with incense.

As the canopy passed, the standard-bearers took their banners and joined the cortège. On my point of vantage, I was already entangled in the folds of one, which wrapped me from head to foot like a modern parody of that venerable patron. I only wriggled out in time by slipping over the edge of the balustrade altogether, where I found myself perched on a stone cornice decorated with the heads of saints. Thus, Diocletian-like, however, I managed at last to get my photograph, despite my involuntary sacrilege which was shared by several swaying, gaily-dressed peasant girls who giggled and squeaked as the priests passed below.

For some minutes we stood there as the bands and the procession once more made their circuit of the town. Then a murmur of voices and the kneeling of the people before the relics held out for them to kiss, proclaimed the return of St. Vlaho down the Stradun. He moved slowly, behind his bishop, through the dense mass of the people. Slowly but surely they approached the steps of the church.

It was a magnificent pageant of civic pride. As each standard-bearer came to the statue of Orlando he halted and swept his standard almost to the ground in a magnificent gesture of allegiance. Here it was that the ancient oath to the republic used to be taken, but the republic is no more, and only the ceremony remains. Each village and each island halted in formal devotion, and then passed on into the church. The standards seemed to wave more proudly, the sun to shine brighter. The gay colours of the national dresses turned the Stradun into a vast flower-garden.

Very many people, including myself, have written about the history of Dubrovnik, and still more have written about its architecture. Therefore I will write now of a subject equally interesting, but far less known in England—its literature.

After the break-up of the Serbian Empire after the death of Dušan and the final dissolution of the last Serbian state with the fall of Smederevo in 1459, there were only two independent Yugoslav states, Montenegro and Dubrovnik. In Montenegro the beginnings of literature were soon choked by the incessant wars against the Turks, and the printing-press at Obod, set up in 1485, was melted down to make bullets. The only centre of Yugoslav literature and freedom of thought was Dubrovnik. The main stream of Yugoslav literature broke up into a number of lesser currents, most of them backwaters, which did not unite again to form a national movement till the beginning of the nineteenth century. In Croatia, in Serbia, in the Voivodina, in Bosnia, and in Slovenia, only a few isolated writers maintained a tenuous continuity along provincial lines. The main current of literature flowed through Dalmatia, and the centre of that stream was Dubrovnik.

The first great period of Dubrovnik literature developed in the full spirit of the Renaissance. The influence of contemporary Italian literature was strong, and, indeed, many Dubrovnik writers wrote also in that language and took a high place in Italian literature. Dante and Petrarch found many imitators and admirers. Life was easy and carefree, the bonds of the Church relaxed. Masquerades, pastorals, and comedies took the place of the liturgies and church services of earlier times.

The luxury of the great patricians was extreme: in 1521 Marin Georgić brought Titian himself from Italy to paint the walls of his palace at Gruž, and Vlaho Sorkočević produced pastorals in the great hall of his palace in 1549. Among the first Dubrovnik writers to use the

Slav tongue were Šiško Menčetić (1457-1527) and Djordje Držić (1461-1501). Both were followers of Petrarch, and repeated his clichés in somewhat artificial love poems; but none the less they laid the foundations of a new period in Yugoslav literature. Dinko Ranjina (1536-1607) was the first great introspective poet of the language. He was at one time Rector of the Republic, and was also a member of the salon of Cosmo de Medici, whose brilliance he copied in Dubrovnik. His poems still breathe the spirit of the Middle Ages, though in a renaissance form, a knight-errant in a jester's cap. The lust of living preached by the poets of his time he regarded as an illness. He held obstinately to an ideal of pure love, and was not content merely to regard women as a theme for poetasters.

After Ranjina, the finest poet of love among the Dubrovnik writers of the sixteenth century was Savko Bobaljević. In quite another style was the Benedictine monk, Marko Vetranić. His poems are often reflective and religious in tone, but sometimes he whipped his verse into almost Rabelaisian satire of the abuses of the Church, and did not hesitate to goad the Vatican itself. Of this period also was the poetess Cvijeta Zuzorić, who is celebrated as the greatest woman poet of Yugoslavia, though in fact she spent most of her life in Italy, and wrote even more in that language than in Slav.

Writers of masques, pastorals, and comedies were many. Nikola Nalješković surpassed even the customary licence of the Italian playwrights in his comedies written for the famous Carnival of Ragusa. Čubrinović is still remembered and honoured for his allegory *The Egyptian*, which was written in a pleasant style, and is full of local colour, and is occasionally revived even at the present day.

But the greatest writer of this period is Marin Držić (1510-1567), whose comedies can still be read with interest and enjoyment. He gives a true picture of the renaissance in Dubrovnik, to use his own phrase, 'its

belly full of wine to the throat'. In his comedies he created a large number of excellent types from Ragusan society, and showed himself rich in an experience of men and women, from which he himself was never able to profit. Through his comedies dart merry lovers, old people ridiculous in their passions, unfaithful wives, spendthrifts, courtesans, venal servants, misers, thick-headed husbands, and naïve peasants. He was a true precursor of Molière, who might easily have uttered his sarcastic remark: 'Without a penny one cannot even say a prayer.'

His own life was equally typical of his time, torn between licence and humanism on one side and religion and discipline on the other. He took orders in Dubrovnik and yet was the real founder of its theatre. Himself an adventurer, with dreams of reforming the Ragusan constitution, he was poet, musician, theologian, and actor. He was at one time Rector of the famous University of Siena, and at another secretary to the notorious political adventurer, Count Rogendorf. His pastoral *Plakir* has a marked resemblance to Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Meanwhile on the island of Hvar, Hektorović was writing idylls on the lives of the fishermen, and in Split, Marko Marulić, elegant Latinist and sincere thinker, foreshadowed in his work the struggle between the ideals of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Flaccus Illyricus (Matija Vlačić) was one of the literary leaders of the Protestant school of Melanchthon.

The seventeenth century, after the great earthquake, was for Dubrovnik a period of political and commercial decline, but of literary exuberance. The number of poets and writers in the national language was legion. More emphasis was laid upon Slav themes, and the marked Italian influence of the previous century is less noticeable. It is also the great period of Dubrovnik latinity, the last indeed in which Yugoslav writers of

importance used that tongue, culminating in the work of the Jesuit Roger Bošković (1711-1787), whose *Theoria philosophiae naturalis*, published in 1758, became world-famous.

The Catholic reaction was vigorous and energetic, and profoundly coloured the literature of the time. Bobadilla, the friend of Loyola, founded a Jesuit college in Dubrovnik. Here Ivan Gundulić, the greatest poet of Dubrovnik, was educated, and it is significant that for his great poem *Osman*, in which he dramatized the centuries of struggle between the Slavs and the Moslems, he chooses for his hero the Catholic King of Poland. It illustrates his favourite theme, the impermanence of all earthly glory. The earlier *Tears of the Prodigal Son*, on the same theme, betrays also his Jesuit upbringing, but is at the same time one of the most profound and beautiful lyric poems in the Yugoslav language. The third of his greater works, *Dubravka*, is an apotheosis of the glory of Dubrovnik. The beautiful fountain outside the Pile gate commemorates it. Even in his lifetime he earned the proud title of 'rex Illyrici carminis', and it is certain that the literature of Dubrovnik attained its greatest glory in his time and by his work.

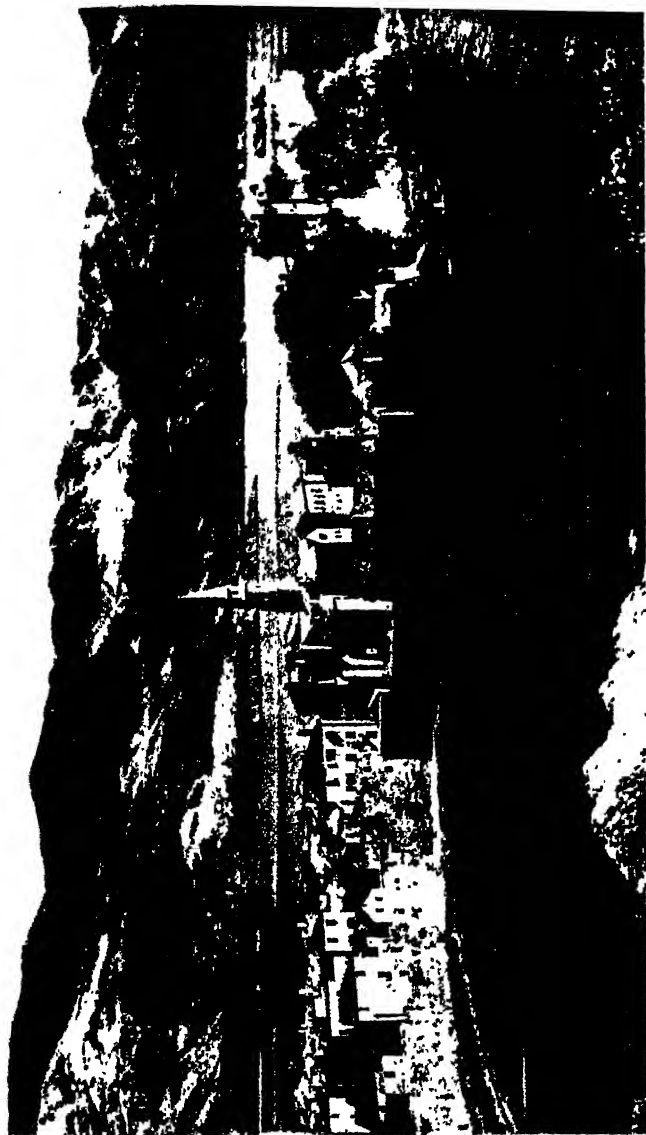
Four other figures in the Dubrovnik literature of the seventeenth century added to the literary glories of the Republic: Ignjat Djordjić, a noble, a Jesuit, and later a Benedictine, whose immense output included everything from sensual love to religious ecstasy; Djivo Bunić, an exquisite writer of light-hearted love-songs; Stijepo Djordjić, whose comedy, the *Dervish*, a parody of contemporary styles, is the best humorous poem of the century, and Junije Palmotić, a writer of first-class drama.

But this great period of Dubrovnik literature was its swan-song. Later writers are of little merit. The centre of real importance shifted elsewhere, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries little of real value was written.

Before leaving Dubrovnik, I made my usual pilgrimage







BUDVA

to the Dominican monastery to see my old friends the red cats. I had with me a Belgrade acquaintance, resplendent in beach pyjamas. As we entered, the old abbot was walking in the cloisters. I asked him about the cats; but, alas, they have both died, full of years and honours, and their place has been taken by a black-and-white tom, who has not yet acquired their majestic philosophy. The abbot introduced me, and then glanced across at my companion. He led me aside: 'Remember,' he said, 'my son, there are three things unfaithful: the sea, a woman, and a cat.'

Alas for me; I love all three of them!

It would take me too long to speak of all pleasant places around Dubrovnik. After all, Dubrovnik is not all Dalmatia, nor Dalmatia all Yugoslavia. So I must leave Lopud and Srebreno, Mlini and Koločep, Trsteno and Kupari, to the inquisitive visitor. But no one should forget the Dubrovačka Rijeka, where the Ombla, in the magical manner of karst rivers, springs full grown out of the mountain-side to form a wide stream where great ships may lie at anchor. This place was chosen by the nobles of Dubrovnik for their summer palaces, of which some remain. They had taste and a sense of beauty. Also, there is one of the best restaurants of all Dalmatia here, the Teta Jela.

Nor, if you have time, should you forget Mljet. I had not: but I was sorry, for I would have liked to see the mongeese (? mongooses?). Some years ago Mljet was infested with snakes, and they were introduced to stay the plague. Now there are no snakes, but many mongeese.

Despite the pundits, I still agree with the Reverend Abbot Ignjat Djurdjević, of the Congregatio Melitensis, who wrote in 1730 of St. Paul's shipwreck. To a lay eye, everything fits his theory. Paul's road to Rome would surely have been up the Adriatic and then over land, possibly from Ravenna. Mljet is the first island of any size in the Adriatic, when approached from the stormy

south. It was called Melita in Paul's time: and then that prevalence of snakes! No, the old abbot had good grounds.

But I could no longer linger in Dubrovnik. I must go on to Cavtat, then through the Konavle, to the Boka Kotorska and south.

Cavtat was the ancient Epidaurus, and may therefore claim to be the mother of Dubrovnik, which was founded by refugees from that city after it was destroyed by the Slavs in the seventh century. In those times it was the most important city between the Neretva and the Boka. It was only rebuilt some time in the tenth century as *Castra Pitaura*, and was then known as *Civitas vetus*, whence it derives its present name. Until 1427 it belonged to various Slav nobles, and was then bought by Dubrovnik, and was a sort of state port when Serb or Bosnian rulers visited that city.

It is now very charming and quiet, with some reputation as a yachting centre; also because of the rather florid villa of Mr. Banac, where the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and also of Kent, have often stayed. There is also a small English colony there, which is far more good-natured and hospitable than English colonies abroad are apt to be.

The great pride of Cavtat, however, is the Račić mausoleum, by Ivan Meštrović. It is a marvellously impressive monument, simple and severe at first sight, with a certain epic grandeur, although not very large in scale. The bronze doors, between two lovely and serene caryatids, depict the four Slavonic apostles or saints, Cyril, Methodius, Gregory, and Sava. Inside, the ceiling is wonderfully designed with angels' heads gazing downwards in mathematical precision at a mosaic pavement of the four evangelists with their accompanying beasts. The figure of St. Rok, with his ever-faithful dog at his feet, is superb.

Indeed, superb and austere are the words that first

come to mind in describing it. Yet to me it is curiously inhuman, the product of an intelligence that has sensed, rather than experienced, beauty. Here Meštrović has more harmony than in his sculptures, say, at Split, but he has lost something of his force, and in so doing something of his peculiar attraction. Death does not seem to mean so much to him as life; here it is a state of cold and static apprehension, not, as in the Rosandić mausoleum, an awesome yet gentle mystery and hope. No one can come away from this tomb unimpressed. Yet, if I had the choice, I would sooner lie in Brač.

Incidentally, every lover of great art should see this mausoleum for himself, in the stone. All the pictures and postcards I have so far seen of it show it as squat and uninspiring. It is certainly neither the one nor the other.

## XI

### THE BOKA KOTORSKA

THE festival of Sv. Trifun of Kotor used to be held the day after that of Sv. Vlaho. But the long political and commercial rivalry of the two cities often led to clashes between the upholders of the rival saints, and the two ceremonies are now, as a rule, held at the same time. Therefore I have never yet had an opportunity of seeing the Kotor feast, which is at least as interesting as that of Dubrovnik.

Sv. Trifun was also a martyr from Asia Minor, having suffered at Kampsadas in Phrygia in A.D. 250 at the age of eighteen. His life and death are more interesting than those of most martyrs, whose sufferings have as a rule a deadly monotony. Even when unskilfully described in the *Della Vita e del Martirio di S. Trifone*, they have a fairy-tale quality that reminds one of Remy de Gourmont. His relics were brought to Kotor in 809, when he was at once accepted as patron of the city and also of the Guild of the Boka Sailors (Bokeljska Mornarica), probably the oldest association of its kind still existent, whose first regulations far pre-date the famous Laws of Oleron. The statute was revised in 1463, which is the date of the document usually shown to tourists, but the records of the Guild go back to 809, and possibly even earlier, when they were under the protection of St. Nicholas, patron of all sailors.

For the sailors of the Boka have always been accounted the finest in Dalmatia. Even rival Zlarin accepts this. Not only Kotor itself, but Prčanj, Dobrota, Perast, and other cities of the Boka were famous for their daring and skilful navigators. When the land behind the mountains ceased to be Slav and became Turk, this power declined,

but their skill and daring continued to be used in the service of other nations. The place of honour on the ships of the Venetian admirals was reserved for the navigators of Perast, who led their fleets at Lepanto. And later Peter the Great of Russia, while he learnt shipbuilding and navigation in Holland and England, enrolled his sailors from the Boka. The staff of the first great Russian admiral, Zmajević, a native of the Boka, is still preserved in the Cathedral of Sv. Trifun. Incidentally I notice in the history of the Guild that I have now before me, dated 1899, i.e. under Austrian rule, that the Admiral of the Mornarica, Count Antun Tripun Luković, was at that time living in Cardiff.

I always enter the Boka with a lightening of heart. Not only is its natural beauty so striking as to be always new and always to reveal some fresh facet of awe-inspiring majesty, but the nature and character of the people are subtly different from those of northern Dalmatia. Perhaps the sea has given them a wider outlook, or perhaps the solemn grandeur of their mountain fjord. Whatever the reason, the people of the Boka are of mixed creeds, the majority Orthodox, with Catholics only in some of the cities. But they live together in a broad-minded tolerance. Indeed, in one village, a little south of the Boka itself, there is a church with two altars where the rival services are solemnized alternatively and without friction. Would that such tolerance were universal! They are more open-hearted, simple, and hospitable. Their pride is the sea, and their patriotism wide and all-embracing. It is the only place in Dalmatia where one is not eternally pestered to talk politics.

There are two ways to enter the Boka. One is by road or rail from Dubrovnik, through the lovely Konavle valley, famous for the beauty of its people and their dresses, and Sutorina, once a Turkish enclave dividing the territories of Dubrovnik from those of Venice (the

corresponding enclave on the north is at Klek, near the Neretva). But the finest way is by sea.

The watchers of the fjord are the fortresses of Oštro and Mamula. Then you enter the outer bay, about fifteen miles long, and thence through the Verige, a narrow strait once closed by chain-booms, into the inner bay, as large as the outer, where is Kotor itself, Perast, Risan, and many other famous cities. The whole is encircled by mountains, rising to six or seven thousand feet from the water's edge. Those on the right are the Krivošije, snow-capped for half the year, whose sturdy highlanders refused the Austrians, and defied the whole might of the Empire for more than a decade.

Once through the Verige, and the immensity of the Boka is almost frightening. The mountains press menacingly forward to the narrow strip of cultivated land where the cities stand, as if threatening to push them and their vineyards and olive-groves into the still, dark waters of the inner gulf. In ancient times they actually did so, for ancient Risan, the capital of the Illyrians and seat of that ferocious enemy of Rome, Queen Teuta, was overwhelmed by a landslide. Traces of its masonry may still be seen on clear days far down under the water.

Before Perast are the twin islands of St. George and the Gospa od Skrpelja, each with its church. The island of the Gospa is said to have been built artificially of stone by the Perastines, in fulfilment of a vow. Certainly it was the graveyard of the city when it was at the height of its power. The tall sentinel cypresses around the little church and the black water around, for the sun penetrates late into this corner of the Boka, make it seem like an island in Lethe, and one watches to catch sight of Charon setting out with his bark from deserted Perast to ferry a few more souls to eternal forgetfulness. No wonder Böcklin chose it for his 'Isle of the Dead'.

For Perast is now deserted. The beautiful Renaissance palaces stand empty, and the great church seems still

more desolate when filled with the few fishermen who still live in the shadow of that former glory. Ichabod!

Kotor itself is, however, vigorous and progressive, for it has now its natural hinterland, from which it was so long cut off by political barriers. Perhaps it is the most impressive of the Boka cities, for immediately behind it rises the tremendous mass of the Lovćen, the Black Mountain itself, up whose precipitous sides you may see the hairpin serpentines of the road to Cetinje. Halfway up the mountain-side a white dot marks the gendarmerie station where was the former frontier blockhouse. The people of Kotor say that the winter snows cease at this point, as if fearing to pass the former boundary. But of the Lovćen road I shall speak later.

The market of Kotor is always bright with the national costumes of the Montenegrins. They look strangely exotic under the frowning Venetian battlements, still decorated with the arms of the noble families. Some of these families are indeed noble, both by descent and by achievement. In the days when Kotor was the port of the Serbian Empire, it was Nikola Buć who was the famous chamberlain of Tsar Dušan, and it was a friar of Kotor, Vid the Franciscan, who built the church of High Dečani, perhaps the most beautiful in all Serbia.

The streets of Kotor are even more narrow and confusing than those of Split or Šibenik. I spent at least half-an-hour trying to find my way to St. Trifun, in a city really not much bigger than a pocket-handkerchief. It is a wonderful old church, dating in its present state from 1166, but built on an older foundation of 809. A gateway of the older church is still preserved in the sacristy, showing intricate Slavonic ornamentation, somewhat similar to the Anglo-Saxon style. But it needs a new cicerone. The old fool who showed me round pointed out one thing after another, murmuring:

'This is six hundred . . . this nine hundred . . . this three hundred, years old', or, occasionally when imagin-



ation failed: 'This is very old indeed.' Amusing, but not instructive.

Kotor is hot, very hot, and somewhat airless. To bathe there is like bathing in a conservatory. So I went on around the Boka to Hercegnovi on the outer bay, my favourite resort in all Dalmatia, which I always choose to rest in when I have had enough travelling.

Of Hercegnovi I have written elsewhere, long and enthusiastically. But I must break my rule of not mentioning hotels by name, to say a word for the Hotel Boka. Better than any hotel I know in Dalmatia, it combines solid comfort with real friendliness and hospitality; and its terrace is beautiful. One overlooks the outer Boka, sitting under a canopy of bougainvillea and among feathery, splayed palms. It is not difficult to spend hours there, doing absolutely nothing, although there is plenty to do in Hercegnovi. I rested there for several days, and only the fact that I was a guest and ashamed to strain hospitality too far prevented my staying still longer.

In the morning I would bathe, in one of the few places where the water is deep enough to dive directly into its refreshing coolness. In the evenings I would walk to the lovely Orthodox monastery of Savina to chat with the monks and look at the treasures given them by the Tsars of Russia, or brought with them from their first home at Tvrđoš in the Hercegovina, which they deserted after the Turkish conquest. There, too, is the simple crystal cross of St. Sava. But the simplicity is atoned for by the tales and legends of that wonderful man. There, too, are the last words written by the ill-fated King Alexander before leaving his native land for Marseilles in October 1934. History will make of him, too, a great figure.

I had a travelling companion on the boat to Ulcinj. I mention her because she is typical of a large number of Central European women, not only Yugoslavs, but all the peoples of the Danube basin. The people of the

mountains and the sea-coast are entirely different. Her father was a rich peasant of Slavonia, and she herself was living an 'emancipated' life in Belgrade. She was pretty, healthy, and energetic, with practically no real education, but with plenty of intelligence and good-humour, and no morals whatsoever. She had no interest in any of the things that interested me; history was for her a closed book which she had no desire to open. She had been brought up on the rich, monotonous Danube plain, and it was her first visit to the hills and the sea. I expected to get from her some new and unusual angles on Dalmatia; and I did, though they were not of the sort I expected. Her name was Resi, and she considerably widened my experience.

The day before she had been on a trip to Cetinje, over the Lovćen pass, perhaps the most magnificent scenery in all Europe. I asked her what she thought about it:

'Very pretty. But boring. There was nothing but mountains.'

I thought of the unending monotony of the fields of maize that seem to stretch from horizon to horizon in the rich plains around her village, and could find no answer.

We started early. There was a slight swell, and the boat was crowded like a barrel of anchovies. A holiday camp was on its way to Sutomore. So I made friends with the captain and found room on the bridge to sit and look about me. I asked Resi to join us, where she at once started a flirtation with the second officer. For, if she had no interest in places, she had plenty in people.

We steamed slowly along past the peninsula of Luštica. It is a sparsely-peopled district, like a little pocket of primitivism between the Boka and Budva. Traces of the blood-feud still linger in the customs of the people, and early last year there was a formal reconciliation of two offended tribes, with ceremonies that have been

forgotten elsewhere for a hundred years. One of the villages of this district is made up of Orthodox Serbs, but all with Spanish names. I went there once, trying to discover their origin, but was unsuccessful, as they knew nothing of their ancestors. Usually a Spanish name in the Balkans means a Jew, as the Balkan Jews are nearly all descendants of the Sephardi, driven out of Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic, and have preserved not only their names but also their language. But this village did not seem to fit the bill. For one thing, they had forgotten their origins and their language, and, save for name, were as Serb as their neighbours. Secondly, Jews seldom become peasants, but rather traders and townsmen. Thirdly, they had no Jewish characteristics of appearance or gesture. I finally concluded that they must be descendants of the Spanish soldiers who once held Hercenovi, and who had been sent across the bay when the new masters took charge. But that is only a hypothesis.

Budva itself is one of the coming resorts of Yugoslavia. It is a tiny little walled medieval city on a spit of land sticking out into the sea, with a curious precipitous island-rock just in front of the tiny harbour, which is too shallow for any but the smallest vessels. Its origin goes back to Roman times, but it was unruly under the Venetians, who limited the number of houses in the city and of persons who might dwell there. It has had to wait until now to develop, and is now doing it with a will. For the plages of the Montenegrin coast are the finest on the Adriatic. Several hotels are unable to hold the flood of guests, and a huge new one is now being built.

Behind Budva serpentine another road to the Boka, through the Tivat polje and over the shoulder of Lovćen. Yet another leads to Cetinje, past the castle of Petrovac, the grimmest and most impressive of all the fortresses of the coast, yet so far up in the mountains that it is

scarcely visible from the sea. Beyond Budva a long sandy beach curves away to St. Stefan, a tiny city built on an islet with a narrow causeway to the shore, like a miniature parody of Budva; and beyond that again the summer palace of the Yugoslav royal family at Miločer.

This southern coast was the step-child both of the Venetians and of the Austrians. The only interest they took in it was to see that it did not belong to Montenegro. The extraordinary beauty and the quality of its bathing beaches did not interest them. For there are no islands to shelter the coast and the shallow sandy bays that are so splendid for bathers were worse than useless as harbours. Until far south, at Bar, there is not a single harbour for large ships. And the hinterland was Montenegro, so there was little trade. So it was left to dream on for centuries in primitive neglect. Only the present government is attempting, and not unsuccessfully, to develop it.

But my mind was brought back to the present by Resi. She was seasick. It must be a natural gift, for the sea was scarcely moving. Maybe she was hungry. For there is a famine on board. The excursionists have eaten every thing on the ship, down to the last slice of bread, and at Budva the cook had not managed to get anything as the shops were closed for the siesta. We could only offer brandy, coffee, and cigarettes, none of which are sustaining on an empty and seasick stomach.

I know this coast, and it may, on occasion, be very rough. Before starting I had asked Resi if she were a good sailor, and she had said yes. Only now I realized that she had never set foot on a boat before.

The coast was now steep and precipitous, with great cliffs dropping hundreds of feet to the water's edge. On the hills behind were dotted tiny Orthodox monasteries, some of them of great age. One was re-consecrated recently by the Serbian Patriarch. I wonder if he was seasick. I should like to see a seasick Patriarch.

Sutomore brought us no relief. It is a lovely little

place, ideal for a summer holiday, but it, alone of Dalmatian resorts, has no molo, and we did not go alongside, but disembarked our excursionists, squealing and giggling, into open boats.

Bar was better. It is a beautiful harbour, almost landlocked, and guarded by the twin castles of Haj and Nehaj. The hills surrounding it are a steely green with immense forests of olives, which are the local source of wealth. On one side, old boundary posts marked the former Montenegrin frontier, for jealous Austria at last allowed the port of Bar to the Montenegrins, possibly because the communications were so bad that it was of little value save as a harbour for the King's yacht. Old Nikola's palace may still be seen: it is now an agricultural school.

But the Montenegrins were not inactive. They gave a concession to an Italian company to build a railway across the divide from Bar to Virpazar on the Lake of Skadar, and the buildings of the company are still the greater part of Bar. Stari (old) Bar is some way inland. Until a year or so ago, this was the only railway in Montenegro, and its snail-like twistings across the mountains were the source of endless jokes at its expense. A peasant is said to have walked to Virpazar and arrived there before the train. It is quite possible; not necessarily one of the jokes.

Our famine was partially repaired by fresh figs.

It was growing dusk as we set out on the last lap, to Ulcinj. The mountains rose in fantastic confusion, range behind range, as if a child were drawing and refused to leave the smallest space unoccupied by some rugged clear-cut peak. There was something faery in the scene. Or rather there would have been if Resi had not still been seasick. But even that could not dull the beauty of the Ulcinj citadel, which we approached as the sun was setting in brilliant colours behind its shattered walls. Here at last was the 'rose-red city half as old as time'.



YUGOSLAV ROYAL SUMMER PALACE, AT MILOČER, NEAR BUDVA



## XII

### CORSAIR CITY: ULCINJ

ULCINJ is no longer Dalmatia. All the other cities of the coast have a certain similarity, due to the influences of Italy and the West. Ulcinj has none. It is of a different world.

Its history has taken quite a different course. It was a city of the Colchians, and later an important city of the shadowy Illyrian Empire of Agron and Teuta, that stretched from Šibenik to Lesh (Alessio in Albania). It was mentioned by Pliny as Olcinium, and was transferred from its earlier site a few miles up the coast to its present one under Justinian in the sixth century, for fear of the Avar invasions. In the eighth century it was taken and held by the Saracens, and the nearby hill of Mavrijan (Moorish) probably preserves a memory of that time. In the first half of the ninth century the Emperor Basil I cleared the seas of these pirates, and for the next three centuries Ulcinj was ruled sometimes by Greek, sometimes by Slav rulers. At the great period of the Nemanja dynasty in Serbia, it appears to have been held by a relative of theirs, Vukan, and his son George in 1242 is referred to as *Rex Georgius dominus Ulcinii*. In the same year it was unsuccessfully attacked by the Tatars. Fresh complaints of piracy broke out in 1281, but during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was still in Christian hands, sometimes Venetian, sometimes Slav rulers of the families of Strašimirović and Balšić, though the origin of this latter dynasty has been disputed by Albanians and Norman French! (? de Baux).

But all this is the dry bones of history, and has left no mark on Ulcinj, save some ruined walls in the deserted



citadel, and an inscription of the Balšas so corrupt that to my mind it is a fake of some pious patriot.

What gave Ulcinj its peculiar colour and the most splendid period of its history was the Turkish conquest of 1571, when it was taken by Uluch Ali, Bey of Algiers, as ally of the Sultan Selim II in his war against Venice. After Lepanto, Uluch Ali became Turkish admiral with the title of Kilidji (the sword), and his corsairs settled in Ulcinj. From that time onwards Ulcinj has been, and remains, a Moslem seaport.

All through the seventeenth century these corsairs harried the ports and shipping of southern Dalmatia. In January 1624 they entered the Boka and destroyed Perast and attempted to do so again in 1687, but were defeated by a force of Perastines and Montenegrins, who killed almost half of them and forced them to disgorge their booty. Then the famous corsair, Hajdar Karamidjia, of Greek descent, became captain of the city and successfully defended it against the Venetians in 1696. It was he who built the Pasha's Mosque and the fountain near it, which still exist.

These corsair wars were rendered more ferocious by the fact that captured Moslems had to ransom themselves with Christian slaves, and so kept, so to speak, a stock on hand. They did not wish to share the fate of Dinko Kampsa, who could not do this, and was stoned to death on the island opposite Budva.

The corsairs of Ulcinj rapidly adopted the Albanian customs and language, and it is probable that the so-called Albanian sailors used by Venice in her Uskok wars were from Ulcinj, as the real Albanian is a poor sailor.

Many famous pirate names are still preserved in the annals of Ulcinj; for example, Hadji Alija, whose base of operations was near Vlora (Valona in Albania), and whose spirit, sword in hand, is still said to haunt the waves. Also Liko Cen, who was commissioned by the Sultan to free the Adriatic of the still more notorious

Greek pirate Haralampija of Messolonghi. This he succeeded in doing, and entered the Golden Horn in triumph with Haralampija's body tied to his bowsprit. For this, his own sins were pardoned, and he ended his life as a merchant. In the eighteenth century a chronicler writes: 'In Ulcinj live some six thousand persons, pirates who call themselves merchants, and live after the manner of Algiers on plunder.' Towards the end of the sixteenth century Serb names also appear among them. When the notorious Mehmed Bušatlija became Pasha of Skadar, however, Ulcinj was a little republic. He attacked the city to defend trade, scuttled its ships, and forced it to submit. The corsair days of Ulcinj were over.

But before leaving the historical side of Ulcinj, there is one very interesting story to be told. When in Belgrade, I had heard of a negro village near Ulcinj, but had put it down to imagination. However, it happens to be true, and there are still several negro families in Ulcinj itself and in the village of Stoja near Bar. At the time of the Montenegrin War of 1878 there were still fifty families, and before that many more. I asked one of them whence his family had come, and he said, probably with truth, that they were the descendants of slaves brought there by the corsairs. He added that they had been harem-keepers, but when I asked him how they had managed to found families, he did not seem to grasp my meaning. Perhaps the corsair harems were more laxly kept. More probably they were used as labourers.

These negroes were used as dowries by the rich families. But after a certain number of years they were freed, and children born to them were born free. Then they became sailors, peasants, and sometimes even shipowners, never craftsmen.

They were all Moslems, and rarely married out of their colour, and were very great dandies. After Ulcinj was taken by the Montenegrins, many left for Skadar and Durres (Durazzo). So that the old custom of the negro

gathering at the Fush Arabi (the Arabian Field) to dance and eat sweatmeats for three days on end no longer exists. At one time as many as three hundred used to gather there.

The story of one of these little nigger boys reads like a page of the *Arabian Nights*. At the time when the famous pirate 'Lambro' (Haralampia) was harrying the Adriatic, the *Sokoleva* of Ulcinj was preparing for sea, and a negro brought his son, Musta, to the captain as cabin-boy. After the crew was armed, the ship sailed. There were fourteen sailors and Musta. Near San Giovanni di Medua they were attacked by Lambro and all the crew slain save Musta, who was taken to Messolonghi as a slave. Three years later, Liko Cen rid the seas of Lambro, and Lambro's wife freed all her household slaves, including Musta. Thence, via Vlora, he returned to Ulcinj.

Naturally all the people of Ulcinj thought him dead with the rest of the crew, and he himself was so changed that they did not recognize him. It was night when he came and knocked on his mother's door. When she asked who was there, he replied her long-lost son. The people of Ulcinj, awakened by the knocking, thought him a vampire, and took guns to kill him. But his mother prevented them, saying that if she smelt behind his left ear she would know him. On her doing so, she cried out: 'This is my son, Musta.' The people fired salutes of joy, and next day prepared a great feast, with three cauldrons of halva (a sweet, sticky sweetmeat).

Musta lived until 1900, and was 124 when he died. His capture and adventures were a common story in Ulcinj, and thus came to the ears of my informant, to whom Musta himself retold it.

. . . . .

There are two luxurious hotels in Ulcinj. The pity of it is that neither of them is yet open. It was Resi the practical who found rooms.

All Moslem towns have a certain sameness. But, after a couple of months in Dalmatia, the Moslem atmosphere came with all the force of novelty. To find on the sea-coast a town with eight mosques in working order, and heaven knows how many in ruins, was surprising. For that is characteristic of Moslem communities. When a mosque begins to fall to bits, nobody worries very much about it. Some pious hadji will doubtless build a new one. Whether this is due to a religious contempt for the earthly habitation even of God, or whether there is more virtue to the soul in building than in repairing a mosque, I do not know. I only know one Yugoslav Moslem, however, who gave his own money as a bequest to repair a mosque, and I rather fancy that was because his house faced it and he didn't want it pulled down and a skyscraper erected in its room. At all events, his pious bequest has assured him a good view from his windows for at least a generation to come.

Our rooms were clean and fairly comfortable. But there is no water-supply in Ulcinj, and I shrank from the ordeal of shaving in cold water with a blunt blade. So next morning I called Resi, and we went together into the *čaršija* (Moslem market).

There, there were barbers for export. Judging from the number, the whole of Ulcinj must spend its spare time getting shaved: judging from the faces in the market, however, no one ever seems to have any spare time. Later I discovered most of them to be little more than intimate *kafanas* for conversation and coffee. For at Ulcinj the coffee is good once more, black and thick and with a real taste, such as only Moslems and a few Serbs can make. The coffee of Dalmatia is thin and watery, like English coffee, which now tastes to me like dirty dishwater.

I was shaved, therefore, by a spruce young Albanian, who kept asking me personal questions, prompted by his younger brother. They were both rogues, but amiable. They were particularly puzzled about Resi. Was I married?

"Yes."

"And is madame your wife?"

The idea was new to me, and I did not at once catch their drift. I said no.

"Ah, but you are a meraklija (connoisseur)!"

I was so startled by this suggestion that I took another look at Resi, who was sitting waiting for me in the kafana opposite. She certainly looked very pretty. Well, perhaps I was after all.

Finally I asked what was the price.

"O, we have no prices in Ulcinj. Give what you like."

I gave what I would have given in any other Yugoslav provincial town. I could see that they were satisfied, but at the same time disappointed that they had not found a mug. They tried to get their own back by selling me smuggled Albanian cigarettes and perfume at extortionate prices.

There are no social distinctions in Ulcinj. Every one talks to every one else on a basis of perfect equality. I sat in front of the shop with the two hairdressers, and various others came to join the group. Certainly we were tourists, but apparently we passed muster. Not so a pair of bright young things who passed through the *čaršija* in bathing dresses; it was a tactless thing to do, for the plage is quite ten minutes away. A number of the older Moslems turned away their heads. Their own women go heavily veiled.

One of them came and sat down beside me, muttering, 'Unbelievers!'

I replied mildly that God has many forms.

'No,' he replied firmly. 'They were talking Serb. God has only three tongues.'

'And they?'

'Arabic, Latin, and Albanian.'

As I was talking Serb myself, there seemed no answer to that one.

The Albanian element is very strong in Ulcinj. There

is a large Montenegrin quarter up the hill, but they do not come so much into the *čaršija*. Along the seafront you will hear mostly Serb, but in the *čaršija* mostly Albanian.

Two more Albanians, this time in European dress, joined the group. Malik, the hairdresser, introduced them. One was a handsome young man with an eagle nose and dark penetrating eyes—I thought at once of the corsairs.

‘He comes from Durres, and is one of the richest merchants in Albania,’ said the irrepressible barber in almost an awed voice.

The young man nodded and smiled. All that he had understood was Durres. He spoke not a word of Serb. Then he turned and saw Resi, and the fat was in the fire.

It was, I think, a case of love at first sight, at least on his part, for Resi would love no one for more than ten minutes at a time. But it greatly complicated my stay in Ulcinj. For Resi knows only Serb, and I was called in by both to act as interpreter. We were a pretty tower of Babel. For I do not know Albanian, and he had to speak faulty Italian. I, who do not know that language very well, had to translate to Resi in Serb. Finally, I threw her reputation to the wolves and told the lovesick Hamdi to hire one of the barbers as interpreter.

For example, the next day, Hamdi insisted on hiring a car to go and see the salt-pans in the plain behind the city. I agreed, but insisted that our interpreter go too. I could not stand a whole afternoon of Italian raptures, especially as Resi was now mocking him openly in Serb, with phrases that I could not, or would not, translate.

The expedition began with an argument that proved to me that all the pirates of Ulcinj are not dead. Some of them are chauffeurs. What Hamdi said to him I don’t know, because it was in Albanian, but he finally agreed to take us at a reasonable price.

The name Ulcinj is supposed to come from an Illyrian

word, though exactly what language is meant by Illyrian I do not know, possibly something like Albanian, meaning 'low field'. The low field in question lies behind the city, stretching from the edge of the mountains to the Albanian frontier at the river Bojana. On it lie the salt-pans, an enormous expanse of flat concrete tanks, six and a half kilometres long, and perhaps a kilometre across. Into them the salt water of the Porta Milena is pumped and there left to evaporate under the broiling heat. The salt gradually forms on the surface of the water, like a thin sheet of ice, and then sinks to form a thick sediment at the bottom of the pans. It is harvested once a year, in August. At the time of our visit it was June, and the deposit in the tanks already thick, with white icy patches on the surface of the water where fresh layers were forming. The heat was intense, and the white glare on the salt hurt the eyes.

Along the banks of the Porta Milena were stacked huge mountains of rough industrial salt, each containing some hundreds of tons, of a dirty cream colour, covered with temporary covers of red tile, so that they looked like the roofs of large houses that had sunk down into the earth. Gangs of men, almost naked and burnt black by the sun, were loading it into barges. Beyond the last salt-pan stretched dreary marshland. At one time this polje was dreaded for its malaria, as parts of the Bojana are even now, but the disease-bringing mosquito does not like the salt, and it is now comparatively healthy, while the distance to Ulcinj itself is too great for even the most athletic anopheles.

The salt-pans have all the dreary beauty of monotony. But the tourist instinct is quickly stilled under so fierce a sun. We were half-cooked and thirsty, and, like Coleridge's mariner, had water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink. Curiously enough, Resi was deeply interested. It was the bustle of human activity that held her attention.

At the workers' canteen lunch was not yet ready. So we stopped at the only kafana in that desolate wilderness, kept by an Albanian for the Albanian workers. They are a sober lot with a curious weakness for sweetmeats. The kafana had rakija, to be sure, and a certain amount of indifferent wine. But its main staple was sweet, thick liquors of pear and cherry, raspberry syrup and Greek mastic, of which a little goes a very long way. The only thing to eat was bread with halva, sweet and coarse as barley-sugar.

There was no sign of taste or refinement. But hunger is the best sauce, and we ate and drank these childish sweets with zest. The whole company was very merry, playing absurd practical jokes. I learnt:

'Rrnoft Shquipnie!' (Long live Albania!), and my Albanian without tears was received with applause.

One or two workers dropped in and joined us. One was dumb. Never until then did I realize how much a man can say without words. In a few vigorous gestures and caricatures he gave us his opinion of the Spanish war. There was no doubt where his sympathies lay.

I have shown my Albanian friends in Ulcinj as somewhat eccentric. Indeed, the two barbers were rogues of the first water, while poor Hamdi was rather more tragic than comic. I knew Resi well enough to know that she would never take him seriously. But the Albanians as a people are a remarkably sympathetic lot. They are not industrious, but that is the fault of their history. But they are manly, good-humoured, with a ready wit, and strictly honest. They have a code of honour which, though crude and primitive, has served them well for a thousand years. They are sober and satisfied with little. They are hospitable, and welcome any stranger whom they respect; to others they are reserved and contemptuous. As individuals they have the finest of the virtues and the more manly of the vices. Their women are moral, reserved, and almost always strictly virtuous. In the



house they have a position of esteem; outside it they are still in a subjection, which may also be laid at the door of history. Often, when one has a chance of seeing them at all, they are extremely beautiful. I snapped one in the *čaršija*; but then she was a Malisor and a Catholic. Even then, I had to dodge a jealous husband.

They are extremely individual, and do not take kindly to government unless it is strong and they approve its methods. They have much in common with the Montenegrins, although for centuries they have waged tribal warfare across the borders. Now, under King Zog, they are acquiring order, civilization, and polish, and, from a short visit to Dürres and Tirana, it seems to me that they have enough character to acquire the civilization without being dazzled by the polish. I know the Albanians of South Serbia well, and like them. But I never thought them capable of controlling a well-ordered state. But after a visit to Albania itself, I changed my views. Certainly there is a strong Italian influence there; but that is veneer. Scratch an Albanian and you will still find an Albanian. They learn from the Italian, but in their heart of hearts despise him and retain their own sturdy independence.

For many years after the war there was bitterness and friction between the Greeks and the Albanians and the Serbs and the Albanians. But that is slowly breaking down under the urgent yet dimly conceived idea of Balkan unity in which Albania will play her part. I may fairly say that there is no Balkan people today which does not regard with sympathy the renaissance of the 'old Pelasgian race'.

My favourite walk in Ulcinj was to the former citadel. It occupies the whole peninsula that forms one of the 'horns' of the harbour. From a distance it is a little reminiscent of Dubrovnik, but of a Dubrovnik deserted and shattered, as it might have been had the city never been rebuilt after the earthquake of 1667.

In the whole vast extent of the fortress only two or three families still live, in tumble-down palaces. It is a strange impression to go there in the evening, for while the fortress as a whole is empty and desolate, the abode only of ghosts, the glassless windows of these few inhabited houses are lit with electric light.

There are few inscriptions or coat of arms, for the great period of Ulcinj was under the corsairs, who took little stock of heraldry. Occasionally you will find a Christian monogram or a shield from Venetian times, but rarely. The Balša inscription, as I have said before, looks like a fake. Indeed the only indubitable trace of pre-Venetian rule that I could find was a fine piece of Slavo-Byzantine ornamentation built into the steps of the main church, afterwards mosque, of the fortress. It, too, is now ruined and deserted.

The final destruction of the citadel dates from the Montenegrin war of 1878.

It is a fascinating, but somewhat perilous, walk at night, for the battered walls may suddenly open into a sheer drop to the water beneath. It is not hard to recreate there the shapes of Liko Cen, of Uluch Ali Kalidji, 'the sword', or of the uneasy ghost of Hadji Alija. Probably it is too late to repair the fortress now, but none the less it adds an air of vanished splendour to the little town, contrasting oddly with the other horn of the harbour, where the two new hotels are rising in brick and concrete, the new challenging the old across the still waters of the bay.

But I had had enough of Hamdi and his barbers. Capriciously, I decided to leave next morning. Resi begged to come with me. She said she could not face Hamdi's raptures alone.

## XIII

### LAND OF THE BLACK MOUNTAIN

WE started at the ungodly hour of 4 a.m. But I need not have worried about missing the bus. It came and considerably hooted under my window at half-past three, and went on hooting until I looked out to prove that I was not still abed. I had made friends the day before with the owner, incidentally also the chauffeur, in a long wrangle about the fare to Cetinje. In the more out-of-the-way parts of Yugoslavia, no one pays very much attention to the printed fares. They serve only as a basis for bargaining. He showed no ill-will when I eventually compounded for about 60 per cent of the official rate.

This Montenegrin outpost land is one of the wildest in Yugoslavia. After passing through the *čaršija*, where the two barbers were already up to speed us on our way, we turned at once into the hills, following the winding course of a long mountain valley, with occasional fortress-like farmhouses. Now and again, on our right, we caught tantalizing glimpses of lovely and silent bays. It was more than an hour's run to our first stop at Stari (old) Bar.

This, too, is a deserted city. At a distance it looks magnificent, a walled city with a large Venetian fortress, built on the edge of a little ravine and guarding the pass through the mountains. It was evidently a place of some importance, being of considerable size, but now looks like the scene of a Gothic novel, for the buildings have all been covered with ivy and other climbing plants, so that it has not the rugged desolation of the fortress of Ulcinj. It, too, was destroyed in the Montenegrin wars, though it was probably in decadence before that time. The present village, for one can no longer call it a city, is built outside

the walls, with the main street, which is most surprisingly stone-paved throughout, ending abruptly at the outer wall of the fortress.

We stopped there for almost an hour while the mail was being prepared in the curious post-office with a fence made of Roman and Venetian inscriptions from the old city. So we had plenty of time to look about. But Resi was still with me, who has not an interest in ruins, and I was half afraid to spoil the effect of its romantic beauty by further probings. Besides, we were both ravenously hungry.

The new village of Old Bar is a strange transition from the purely Oriental to the modern Montenegrin. The main street is clean and well arranged, but the side-streets are squalid and casual. The shops were still shut—it was only a little after five—but the market was already commencing, and the kafanas were open. Nevertheless, I do not advise the tourist to rely upon them. They had nothing but scone-like bread, Turkish coffee, and eggs. One landlord obligingly offered to cook us anything we chose to buy in the town, but after a glance at the meat market, we returned to the eggs. By the time we were more or less appeased, our bus was hooting for departure.

Thence, through forests of tortured olives to New Bar. That and Ulcinj are the only Yugoslav towns without public shoeblacks.

One gets more amusement travelling by bus in Yugoslavia than in any other way; that is, on the non-tourist routes. Journeys are long, and a companionship of the road quickly established. Furthermore, a bus has a definite character of its own, which a train hasn't, while there is too much room on a boat.

We stopped just outside Bar for the driver to change the bouquet on the dashboard. It was evidently a regular thing, for a pretty peasant girl was already picking and binding the flowers as we arrived. Then a peasant pro-

duced a bottle of home-made rakija, and, after scrupulously wiping the mouth with his sleeve, offered it round. It tasted like fire, but was astonishingly refreshing.

Now we were ascending the wide spirals to cross the Sutorman range, stopping at tiny mountain villages on the way. From the summit we enjoyed a last marvellous view of the perfect semicircle of Bar Harbour, before plunging downwards in even closer spirals towards Vir-Pazar and the Lake of Skadar.

The first view of Vir-Pazar, the 'Whirlpool-market', and the Lake of Skadar is an experience. It looks not so much like a lake as a sunken world. The bare karst hills run straight down into the water, which is still and shallow, with the green of water weeds showing through, and trees growing in desultory lines. In the stiller reaches the surface is covered with a dark green alga. Only in the distance is the lake clear and blue.

Vir-Pazar itself is almost surrounded by water, with the roads forming causeways binding it to the higher land around. For the Lake of Skadar is really a flooded polje, with the higher hillocks standing out of it as islands. A drop of two or three metres in the water-level would make it possible to reclaim almost a third of its area and to rescue for cultivation many broad acres that have been rendered valueless since the silting up of the river Bojana forced the lake to its present level. Then the real lake, that section which looks blue and not green, would become a friend and not an enemy of man, and this part of Montenegro, which at present has to import grain, would become a great producing centre. It is a grandiose plan, but not really as difficult or as expensive as it at first appears.

Vir-Pazar is picturesque to look down upon, but uninteresting to stay in. What devil induced the bus to halt here for lunch I do not know. The guide-book says it has a good inn with excellent local food. It may be so. But in a town of not more than a couple of hundred

houses, I failed to find it. The inn was bad and the food execrable.

So we were only too glad to push off again towards Rijeka Crnojevića, along a road that clung to the rocky hillsides by its eyelids as if scared of falling into the lake.

The northern end of the lake is dotted with tiny islands, some of which have a melancholy record as places of exile in Montenegrin times. One still supports a monastery. Another, the largest, Vranjina, near the entrance of the Crnojević river, is supposed at one time to have been the capital of Zeta, the predecessor of Montenegro. At present that bare and dromedary islet merely supports a miserable fishing village and a multitude of snakes. Perhaps at that time the Skadarsko polje was not permanently flooded. In such a case it might have been a good site. I was told there was nothing interesting to see there, so did not trouble to interrupt my journey.

Rijeka Crnojevića would have made a better stopping place. It is a picturesque little place on the Crnojević river, and has acquired beauty therefrom. There is nothing particularly interesting in the village itself, save that its principal inn is cleaner than at Vir-Pazar.

The Crnojević river is an arm of the Lake of Skadar, winding between tall cliffs of bare karst of that peculiar blackness of Montenegro. Seen from the Podgorica road, it has an extraordinary beauty; the still waters and frowning black cliffs and twisting course seem like a stage scene for the coming of Siegfried's ship to Iceland, but the surface of the water is dead and unrippled, covered with water-plants, and leaving only a narrow strip of open water for the passage of the postal packet to Skadar. At certain seasons it is a blaze of white water-lilies, as gay and decorative as a Japanese print, so that the amateur art-critic has his work cut out to identify the school of the celestial author. A painter could make a marvellous picture of the Crnojević river. But he had better exhibit



remained the capital of the Montenegrins. He also inflicted the first of a long series of defeats on the Ottoman armies, who tried to subdue the Black Mountain.

From time to time the Montenegrins acknowledged a shadowy overlordship of Turks and, in earlier times, Venetians, but neither at any time had any effective rule. True, the Turks destroyed Cetinje, but then had once more to retreat. The truth was that, before the building of modern roads, the Black Mountain was impregnable. A small army the Montenegrins could defeat; a large army could not live in that stony and barren land. Montenegro became synonymous with South Slav freedom.

After the extinction of the Crnojević family, Montenegro was ruled by its bishops, and by a rather ill-defined authority called the gubernador. But with the rise of the greatest of the Montenegrin families, Petrović-Njegoš, these two authorities were combined, so that Montenegro was ruled by a sort of autocratic theocracy, the line of descent being from uncle to nephew. Only later did it become a kingdom with a normal line of succession. Gradually it increased its tiny territory. Always it had a burning interest in Yugoslav liberation, always a hatred of the Turks. Unruly and undisciplined, but brave and enthusiastic, it rendered great services to the Yugoslav ideal. But dynastic quarrels embittered the issue in the late nineteenth century and during the Great War, King Nikola flirted with the Central Powers. Finally the people of Montenegro deposed the dynasty and declared their adherence to the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes at Podgorica in 1918, and the gallant history of Montenegro became merged in that of Yugoslavia.

The present Yugoslav dynasty is closely allied to the former Montenegrin line, and the late King Alexander I was born at Cetinje.

Incidentally the Yugoslav name for Montenegro is Crna Gora, both, of course, meaning Black Mountain.



The greatest ruler of Montenegro was the Prince-Bishop Petar Petrović-Njegoš. He was also the greatest poet of the Yugoslav language, surpassing even Gundulić in the power and sweep of his characterization and the beauty of his language. He writes in a very terse style, a little reminiscent of Browning, and equally difficult to read. His two greatest works are poetic dramas, describing the two most vivid events in Montenegrin history. The finest of them, the *Mountain Wreath* (Gorski Vijenac), describes the Montenegrin Vespers. Islam had begun to penetrate even among the Montenegrins, whose whole existence had been bound up with the struggle for the Cross. Heroic measures were decided on, and at a given moment all Moslems in the country were given their choice of conversion or the sword. The outbreak began at Vir-Pazar. But it is not in mere narration that the poem is so remarkable, but in the character drawing of the leaders, both Christian and Moslem, the clash of ideals, and real depth and feeling of the verse. The second drama describes the short rule of Stefan the Small, a political adventurer who came to Montenegro and for a time ruled by giving out that he was the murdered Russian Tsar Peter III who had escaped his enemies. The Montenegrins accepted him, having always had a great fondness for the Russians, whom they considered as the greatest of the Slav peoples and their especial protectors. The wisdom and good sense of his rule was sufficient to prove his claims to be untrue!

A third great poem, *The Light of the Microcosm*, is Miltonic and visionary, but now little read. .

This long period of eternal struggle against the Turks has had a great influence on the character of the Montenegrin. He has so long been a warrior that he now finds it difficult to be anything else, and still regards the trader and the artisan as beings of a somewhat lower order. He has, in fact, preserved in a primitive form the spirit of the medieval knight, with all its virtues and very many

of its prejudices. He makes a first-class soldier and administrator, but a poor subordinate. Therefore the Montenegrin outside his own country either rises rapidly to a position of trust and influence, or, alternatively, becomes the most morally corrupt of all the Yugoslavs. It is a question of character and of education. Those who have the character to apply their code of honour and heroism to the complexities of the modern world become great men; those who forsake it, rapidly acquire a Western polish and Western vices, but little else.

The heroic code of the Montenegrin is deeply respected by the other Yugoslavs, but is also the occasion of a good deal of dry humour. Jokes against the Montenegrins in Yugoslavia are almost as common as against the Scotch in England.

A peasant story tells how, when God was distributing the stones on the Days of Creation, the Devil slit open the bag as He was passing over Montenegro. It certainly describes the landscape. But, none the less, a trip through Montenegro is extremely beautiful. The mountains are high and impressive, the poljes little green patches of fertility. The rivers, rich in trout, rush foaming through picturesque gorges. Almost at every season there is something to lend a touch of colour to the grim landscape. At this time it was the rich red of the pomegranates; later it will be the brilliant yellow of the pumpkins.

This is the Montenegro that most tourists know. But the eastern districts are different. There is less stone there and more forests, and at the mountain saddle between Cetinje and Podgorica the Mediterranean flora ceases and the Continental begins. There are no more figs and olives and pomegranates, but forests of pine and an occasional poplar gives a hint of the typical landscape of South Serbia.

I had come through that way from Peć a short time before, when I had been forced to make a rapid visit to a friend in Skoplje. But I shall not describe Peć here; it

will come in its proper place. But the bus trip from there to Cetinje is remarkable and well worth while for the traveller who wishes to see a little more of Montenegro. In this way he will traverse the entire length of the former kingdom.

The road was made in 1925, and is a masterpiece of engineering. It passes through the Rugovo gorge, with the mountain torrent of the Bistrica below. But one is well advised, if one has the money, to go by private car. For the buses are covered, and in the depths of the gorge one cannot see the tops of the mountains and loses some of the effect, as if one were travelling through a tunnel. I was, unfortunately, forced to take the ordinary bus, which was overcrowded, and got a very stiff neck trying to crane outwards and look up.

It is rather a terrifying road. For the gorge is narrow, and to ascend to the pass it has to serpentine up the sides of the ravine itself in more than usually break-neck turns and gradients. Also the Montenegrin chauffeurs are so familiar with its fearsome abysses that they regard them with a contempt that the average passenger does not share. But they are really efficient, and their incessant sounding of the horn is really necessary, although irritating. On that particular journey we met a private car that had omitted to hoot, and just managed to draw up, nose to nose, on the narrow road with wheels a few inches away from a drop of some seven or eight hundred feet!

It was June, but we ascended twice to the snowline before reaching Podgorica. The first and most important pass was the Čakor, about five and a half thousand feet above sea-level. The houses here are still wooden; the typical stone-built Montenegrin houses commence a little before Podgorica, but the brilliant national costumes are even more in evidence. The upland meadows are gay with cyclamens, huge buttercups, and yard-high foxgloves.

My companion this time was a high official of the Provincial Administration, who snored peaceably on my

shoulder. At intervals I thrust him to the other side, but he only slumped back again, only to wake once to curse when a home-made basket of wild strawberries burst over his white suit and covered him with purple patches. On the way we passed the cross-roads to Kolašin, once a wild enough spot, but now a favourite forest resort. It is especially beloved by the Albanians, and I was interested to note that the unveiled Moslem girls—for the veil is forbidden in Albania—unpacked at the frontier and entered Yugoslavia in accordance with the laws of Islam.

There could scarcely be a greater contrast between Andrijevisa, the first town on this route, and Podgorica the second. Andrijevisa is built of wood amongst forests; Podgorica of stone amid stones. Yet neither is very interesting. The Montenegrin countryside is lovely, but the towns are dull. At Podgorica there is a fine medieval bridge, the ruins of Roman Dioclea, and, curiously enough for Montenegro, mosques. But it is dull, none the less.

So, for that matter, is Cetinje. It is only interesting because it was once a capital and a very small one, so that there are palaces, government offices, and legations on a dolls' house scale. The palace is interesting to those who can re-create the characters of vanished worthies from inanimate things, and there are many places which have been important in the history of Montenegro. But the landscape does all that is necessary in that regard, and, otherwise, Cetinje is sleepy and undistinguished. But the journey there from the coast is well worth while because of the Lovćen Pass, and there are a couple of good hotels, with good food and discreet music. Of more hectic amusements Cetinje has none; it is a city of pensioners, leading family lives. It is only because of its distinguished history and the pride of the Montenegrins that it has become the capital of a province. From any other point of view, Dubrovnik would have been the better choice.

Incidentally, at Cetinje I decanted Resi. She decided to stay there, and I to go back to Dubrovnik and thence into Bosnia.

The road from Cetinje to the sea is now well known, and bus loads of tourists cover it daily during the season. They are right, for such a journey can rarely be found elsewhere. One skirts the Cetinjsko polje, and thence over a range of mountains into that of Njeguši, the native village of the Njegoš family. At the village inn a 'serdar' joined us, a very mountain of a man in full national costume of leather hide sandals, full baggy blue breeches, wide sash bristling with ornamental daggers and pistols, gold and silver embroidered waistcoat, and the characteristic Montenegrin cap. Despite his ferocious appearance, he was a mild and genial old gentleman, who greeted the aged and ragged postman sitting beside me with a 'Good morning, president!'

Every one in Montenegro likes to have a title.

After a stop at the 'Grand Hotel', a small stone cottage selling beer, we started on the climb towards Lovćen. Away on the left a small round building on the summit marked the tomb of the poet and prince-bishop. Suddenly and surprisingly, at the top of the col, we came once more in sight of the sea.

It is next to impossible to convey in words the view of the Boka from the Lovćen pass. The sight of the fjord and the mountains below is so remarkable that even after many experiences of it one still catches one's breath in wonder. The sight of it remains clearly etched on one's memory even after months and years of other seas and other mountains. To use superlatives is simply to belittle its greatness.

The pass is so high that one looks right over the summits of the intervening mountains across the inner bay to the outer and to the deep sea beyond. Kotor itself is at first hidden, being almost directly below one. You see it later as you descend. It gives you the same

feeling of gasping wonder as on first seeing a fine landscape from a descending plane. Every detail seems small, and the whole vastness alone important. When Lovćen is itself shrouded in clouds, the scene below is even more impressive; for through the mist one catches tantalizing glimpses of dark mountains and bright blue seas which grow clearer and clearer as one descends.

The bus winds slowly down the steep serpentines of the Lovćen, and the details of the scene become more and more important. First you see the mountain-bound plateau of Tivat and the mysterious Gulf of Traste; then Hercegnovi shining white in the distant sun. Farther down the central mountains of the Boka block them out, and as one descends to the level of their summits you look over the inner bay with its two magical islands, Perast, Dobrota, and Prčanj. Still lower and you come in sight of Kotor itself and the great fortress of St. Ivan, laid down below like a map in a guide-book. It is still half-an-hour's journey away, yet it looks as though you could pitch a stone on to its battlements. One of the large ships of the Jadranska Plovidba at the quay-side seems like a child's toy. Then lower and lower, till you are no longer with the help of Lovćen master of the mountains, but they instead rise up about you, dwarfing you once again into insignificance. And at last, from the heights where there may yet be traces of snow, you descend to the magnolias and oleanders, the feathery palms and the broiling heat of Kotor.

This time I did not stop, but went straight on to Dubrovnik. To-morrow mid-day I shall leave for Bosnia.

## XIV

### FROM EAST TO WEST: SARAJEVO IN TRANSITION

I LEFT Dubrovnik by slow train. It is a practice that I do not recommend to others, for the Bosnian railways are slow and foodless and uncomfortable. They burn soft coal that turns one to a chimney-sweep in a hour or so. True, there was a fast train also, with a restaurant car attached, but that started at night, and familiarity has by no means aroused in me a contempt for the Neretva valley. Despite heat, famine, and dirt, I take every opportunity of seeing it again.

But in justice to the Yugoslav railway system, I must also say that a week or so after my journey they introduced Diesel trains on this route, which are clean and comfortable, and, considering the mountainous nature of the route, fairly fast. The tunnels are no longer smoky pits of horror, but cool oases; and there is a buffet on the train. This excellent idea will shortly be introduced on other routes as well.

This is not a good line, but it is a wonder that there is a line there at all. It crawls slowly upwards in intricate serpentine over the mountains behind the Dubrovačka Rijeka. First on one side, then on the other, one looks down at the most lovely panorama of shining blue sea, graceful and solemn cypresses, and old, stone-built summer palaces of the former Dubrovnik patricians. Almost directly below one is the source of the Ombla. Then a patch of bare stone, and then the last view of the Adriatic, the Bay of Dubrovnik, with Čavtat in the distance, and a tiny white dot that is the Meštrović mausoleum. Then naked karst and the sun-scorched station of Uskoplje.

But in July the karst is not quite so forbidding. The summer heats have not yet scalded its shallow-rooted grasses. The pomegranates are just beginning to turn from red blossom to bulbous fruit. Tall yellow flowers stand defiantly in the chinks of the stones. In the tiny cup-like 'vrtači' of red earth, which alone are cultivable, there are still tufts of green maize, or, rarely, yellow corn. It is already too high and exposed for olives, but there are still figs and the first whitish flowers of the autumn pumpkins. It is not so grim and impressive as in winter, but it is more friendly.

Then we creep down once more to the Popovo polje, whose exact nature always worries the inquisitive tourist. In spring it is a vast shallow lake, with little red-roofed villages along its stony banks. But in early summer the waters sink away into underground ghylls or 'ponors', leaving a shallow but rich deposit of reddish earth, which is extraordinarily fertile. Sometimes the peasants get two, or even three, crops from it before the waters rise again to replenish it. So waterless is it in high summer that every village has its cistern to preserve drinking water, for the river is not a mere trickle. It has disappeared altogether. Now, in July, it is a field of young corn and broad-leafed tobacco plants. For the Hercegovinian tobacco is excellent, and many connoisseurs prefer its broad leaves to the smaller more aromatic leaves of the Macedonian tobacco of South Serbia.

Here, too, you will see the old-fashioned hand-ploughs, usually with a wooden coulter. Steel implements would break in the stony soil.

At Gabela we entered the valley of the Neretva. It is not far from Metković, but how different a landscape! For the river is no longer olive and dirtied, but flows with a clear pure green which becomes more and more intense as one advances up the valley until at Mostar it is like emerald watered silk. The trees were heavy with fruit; figs and golden apricots.



The people, too, have changed. The men working in the fields wear tattered fezzes, and the women national costume. At Čapljina, a large but undistinguished town, we passed several hundred of them, evidently going to work in some factory. Most were Moslem.

It may come as a surprise to some people to know that more than a million Yugoslavs are Moslems. Even those who do know the fact usually call them Turks, and assume that they are flotsam left in the Balkans after the Turkish conquest. It is a fairly natural mistake, seeing that Bosnia and the Hercegovina were *de facto* Ottoman till 1875 and *de jure* until 1908; and it is further complicated by the fact that they often use the word Turk of themselves, the national and religious ideas having become hopelessly tangled up in their minds. As a matter of fact, there have never been many Turks by race in Bosnia and the Hercegovina, and not many more in South Serbia, where a few scattered villages of real Turks still remain. Few, if any, of them know Turkish well, and this district is, in fact, celebrated for the purity of its Serbo-Croatian.

The Ottoman power was essentially an Empire and not a nation. There was no national feeling, and the difference between conquerors and conquered was one of religion. Many of the greatest men of the Ottoman Empire were Slav or Albanian by origin, and for a long time Serbian was the official language in dealing with foreign ambassadors.

In Serbia the Turkish authorities were the agents of a purely military occupation, and lived largely in the few towns, whence they were easily evacuated after the Serbian insurrections. In South Serbia the problem, though more complex, was in essentials similar. But in Bosnia it was quite different. Instead of becoming a Turkish province, governed by Turkish officials, Bosnia became a more or less autonomous province, governed *de facto* by Moslem descendants of the former Slav nobility, who frequently paid remarkably little attention

to the officials sent from Stambul, who were scarcely permitted within Sarajevo, but governed more or less nominally from Travnik or Banja Luka.

The reason for this curious fact must be sought for far back in history, and is connected with the somewhat mysterious sect of the Bogumils, whose memorials may still be found in the more distant parts of the country and in the Sarajevo Museum.

The sect originated in the dark ages in Bulgaria. We know its earliest precepts largely from its enemies, who describe it as anti-moral and anti-social. The former it can hardly have been, as the extreme ascetics of the sect even eschewed marriage; the second, from a medieval point of view, it probably was, for it very early developed nationalist tendencies, and insisted on the Word of God being preached in the language of the people. This was not to the liking of the Greek priesthood among the Bulgars at that time.

Thence it spread into Macedonia, where it has left many traces on place-names, but was again persecuted by the Nemanjas. In Bosnia, however, it was welcomed and almost became a national Church, though its earlier asceticism was much modified and its antinomian tenets restricted by a rough Church organization. The Bogumils might indeed be classed as forerunners of the Reformation, and, in fact, their influence and teachings strongly affected the Patereni of Milan, the Albigensians of Toulouse, and perhaps even the Lollards of England.

The Bosnians, then as now, were a political and religious transition between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs, who agreed only in regarding their theories of the equal powers of Good and Evil as Manichæan—as indeed they were—and persecuting them. Both also had an eye to their territory. Thus, without Christian support, the Bosnian nobles had no great aversion to being converted to Islam, and, incidentally, saving their position and property in the process. A great part of the so-called

conquest of Bosnia was accomplished by the Bosnians themselves; a great part of the long tale of treachery that accompanied it was genuine conversion. The Bosnian feudal lords became Moslem begs and retained their power. The peasantry also followed suit, to an extent unheard of in Serbia and Macedonia, and the creation of a Moslem population was in the main a peaceful process.

Many, however, continued their Bogumil rites under the cover of Islam. The last Bogumil family, that of Helež, is supposed to have died out in the village of Dubrovčani as late as 1867.

Just beyond Capljina, on the far side of the river, is one of the most lovely cities of Bosnia, Počitelj. Unfortunately a thick clump of trees screens most of the view from the train, so that the passer-by has only a momentary glimpse. The man with a car is luckier; he can stop and investigate.

The regular rectangle of the walls, climbing up the steep river bank, gives one the impression that the whole city has been tipped forward by a kindly djinn in order that one may 'see the works'. In the mathematical centre of the rectangle is a fine mosque, with the usual square sahat-kula (clock-tower) behind. Počitelj is first mentioned in 1448, but is probably older, for the Hungarian king-errant Mathias Corvinus garrisoned it in 1465 against the Turks, who none the less took it under Hazabeg in 1471. Under them it became a small but strong fortress, after the destruction of Gabela by the Venetians in 1715, the most important in the lower Neretva valley. The mosque was built in 1562 by a certain Hadži Alija, but was later repaired by one of the most famous sons of Počitelj, Šišman Ibrahim Pasha, who was Vali of Egypt. His first name has a curiously Bogumil ring about it.

The whole Neretva gorge is very beautiful, and the train follows the river faithfully along a series of fertile



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poljes; first, that of Gabela, and then, after an interval of sterile stone, by that of Mostar. Here the river Buna joins the Neretva in a series of cascades, and one can just see the deserted mosque and the old coffee-houses near the source of that river, which, like the Ombla, issues in full stream from the mountain-side. The coolness and the excellent trout of this charming spot made it a favourite summer resort of the Moslem begs.

At each stop of the train, most of the passengers rushed out to the drinking-water pumps with cups, bottles, and utensils of every description. The heat was intense; water spilled on the track literally dried before one's eyes. At first I had laughed at the bottle-maniacs. But as early as Gabela I had acquired a bottle of my own and was soon leading the gang.

The Mostar polje is literally the meeting of East and West. The houses of Mostar itself are still stone-built, and the streets paved in the Mediterranean manner. But the gardens of the mosques and the little familiar coffee-houses are definitely Bosnian. Nature, too, has chosen Mostar as a frontier. Here are the last figs and apricots and the first walnuts and chestnuts. The Hercegovina is mostly karst: Bosnia mostly forest; and the Ivan Planina which divides the two also divides the watersheds of the Adriatic and the Black Sea.

It is a curious feeling to stand on the banks of some river, not a hundred miles from the Adriatic, as the Sana or the Kupa, and to think that the stream at one's feet eventually discharges into the Black Sea. The Black Sea watershed is enormous; that of the Adriatic short and precipitous.

But it was dark when we crossed the Ivan Planina, and already midnight when we reached Sarajevo.

. . . . .

One of my favourite places in Sarajevo is Mustafa's shop. Not only is it interesting in itself, with its show of

old embroideries, weapons, metal-work, and jewellery, but it is like a pleasant social club. One may sit there, comfortably drinking Turkish coffee, and sooner or later all the visitors and most of the inhabitants of Sarajevo will drop in for a chat. There is no entrance fee but friendship, and no subscription save a willingness to converse.

Sometimes I would sit there almost all day, chatting, smoking, and drinking coffee. That coffee becomes an obsession. Sometimes between us we would drink forty cups a day. We even lunched in the shop, off *djuveč* and salad, brought in from a Moslem restaurant, and served in big silver dishes. Each person had a wide trencher of bread and ate either with spoon or fingers. There is an absurd prejudice against eating with the fingers. It can be a perfectly dignified and satisfactory procedure.

Our particular cookshop was a good one, for it was kept by a man who had been a head cook in the Sultan's palace, in the days when there was a Sultan. He was a master of his art, and would produce *djuvečs*, kebabs, and other Oriental dishes that were both tasty and satisfying. His sweetmeats were superb, and his salads flavoured with interesting herbs, of which I could only learn the dialect names, which are useless elsewhere. He was a jovial ruffian, with many good stories of old Stambul, and his kitchen was always open to inspection. My only objection was that he cooked everything in mutton fat, which takes a certain amount of practice to assimilate.

Those who came and went in the shop as we sat and talked were a lively cross-section of Sarajevo. Firstly, there were the tourists, arrogant Germans, diffident Englishwomen, talkative Italians, or loudly dressed Magyars. Then there were the craftsmen of the market, who would tumble piles of old jewellery on to the counter and argue about how to re-set them; or some dignified old lady waiting to sell some marvellously embroidered coat which may have been in her family for generations.

For there are plenty of *nouveaux pauvres* in Sarajevo. Or some girl who entered shyly to deliver some embroidery work and would not lift her veil, as well as streams of miscellaneous seekers after posts and privileges. For Mustafa's family has great political influence.

It was a fascinating place, that shop, and there was always good conversation. For the Bosnian Moslem of good family is a gentleman in every sense of the word, while the many differences between him and the Christian only add a certain spice to the talk which would range from history to politics, from women to food, and from art and poetry to the new motor-trains. Seldom have I enjoyed days more, and seldom have I done so little and yet learned so much.

Mustafa's shop is in the Baš-Čaršija, which is at once typical of Sarajevo and foreign to it. For the life in Baš-Čaršija goes on much the same today as it has for a hundred years, while Sarajevo itself, outside this charmed circle, is changing, alas, only too rapidly. In the old days the market was the centre of revolt; when the shutters were up in the čaršija something serious was happening, or about to happen. Now it is the centre of Moslem conservatism, none the less strong for being easy-going and good-natured.

No one takes life very seriously in the čaršija. When a man has done enough for the day, he simply sits back, chats with his friends, and drinks coffee. I have heard a respectable merchant, sitting in his own shop, tell a number of tourists that the owner was out, and that he could do nothing till he returned. He was in the middle of an interesting conversation, and did not want to be disturbed. (When I told an American friend of this, he gave me an hour's lecture on business methods!) The porters work till they have made their ten or twenty dinars, enough for the day. Then they knock off. If any one comes along with more work, they will simply refer him to some colleague who has not yet earned



his daily portion. Baš-Čaršija is a lesson in the art of living.

Most of the shops are open to the street, and the patron sits there cross-legged, going leisurely about his business. They are so small that he can usually reach all his stock without rising. If an important customer or a friend comes, there is always a coffee-shop within hail. Only in the craftsmen's streets—for each trade has its own street—the noise of the tiny hammers on the copper is like the Hall of the Nibelungs. All else is grave and dignified: save in the street of the pawnbrokers and moneychangers, where most of the shopmen are Jews, is there much noise, bustle, and gesticulation.

There is no need for any one in Baš-Čaršija to move out of his shop. For the world brings all the things that he wants to his feet. There is a constant stream of pedlars passing to and fro, selling every conceivable form of food and drink, any sort of trinket and utensil; anything, in fact, from fine lace to smuggled tobacco. There is always plenty of time. Just sit and drink coffee and chat; what you want will come to you sooner or later. Most of them sit without shoes, but with a pair of wooden pattens handy, to cross the road if necessary.

But if the masters are dignified, the apprentices are little devils. One of them is just now trying to light a train of fire-crackers to startle a sleeping café-keeper.

The Moslems are very kind to animals, and the easy, go-as-you-please life of the čaršija is shared by a multitude of cats and kittens, which look sleek and well cared for. I have known Mustafa waste hours playing with a kitten, while another of my market friends, the last tassel maker in the čaršija, usually has a cat sleeping on his knee. There is little wheeled traffic in the small streets of the market, and they come and go silently and peacefully upon their lawful occasions.

The čaršija is built close to and around the wonderful

Beg's Mosque, built by Ghazi Husrav Beg the Victorious in 1530. He was one of the great benefactors of Sarajevo, and there, too, is his medresseh and the ruins of his hammam.

The life of the *čaršija* still goes on much as in old times. But a good deal of the splendour has departed, outmatched by the competition of modern life. There are no more *pasvandjijas* to patrol the streets by night with their wooden rattles, and the great hans are empty and deserted, their mission taken over by large hotels in the western quarter of the city. Mustafa would sometime look sadly out and say:

'Old Sarajevo is dying out; every day I see funerals passing by of men I have known.'

It is not to be wondered at. Nor, perhaps, is it altogether to be regretted, save by those who regard foreign cities as museums for their entertainment. For old Sarajevo was bound to go, broken down by modern practice and modern competition. It is inevitable that the *čaršija* become more and more a tourist attraction, and less and less a power in the city.

For the Bosnian Moslems, though conservative in their customs, are sufficiently wide awake to modern life. True, the old noble families, the begs and agas, have been crippled by the land reform, and, being used to a life of ease, with serfs for every service, have not been able to adapt themselves and are dying out in poverty. But it was necessary that the peasants own the land they tilled, and the Moslem trading families and intellectuals take a part in Yugoslav life at least commensurate with their numbers. The Minister of Communications, Dr. Mehmed Spaho, is a Moslem.

The women, too. In the *čaršija* they still go veiled and wrapped in those voluminous 'zars' that I irreverently refer to as 'flea-bags'. Custom is still strong in Sarajevo. But many of the younger ones have discarded the veil and are taking their rightful places in the community.

Few, if any, continue to wear it when they go, say, to Belgrade.

There is no compulsion, save that of family and custom. The veil is gradually being discarded, because it is no longer suitable for modern life. But the process sometimes passes through some amusing transitions. On the Moslem corso, along the banks of the Miljačka, I have seen ladies dressed in the latest fashion, with a tiny black veil hiding mouth and eyes. I had almost written 'impenetrable', but as a matter of fact the veil of Sarajevo is by no means so; it is sometimes so transparent that I question if it is not an aid to coquetry. Be that as it may, the heavily veiled woman is still a mystery; one's eyes follow her in the street, trying to discern her secret, or dwell curiously on hands and feet, trying to guess her age and social station. Without the veil, only great beauty draws the eye.

The most comic example of this transition I ever saw, however, was at Zelenika on the Gulf of Kotor, where a Moslem family was on holiday. The young and pretty wife actually went down to the plage in a bathing dress and a veil!

The attitude of the Moslems themselves is typical of a changing society. It is rather like the acceptance of the stage in Victorian England. The older generation hold firmly to the old traditions, including the veil. The younger generation is content to let matters take their natural course.

But modern life has bitten deeply into the old life of Sarajevo. It is not only that the fine old houses of the begs with their secret gardens and quiet fountains are disappearing before modern mud-and-hairpin villas. What is more important to the visitor is that the old café life is dying out. The lovely moonlit café gardens on Jekovac and Bistrik are now silent by night. Since 1935, the life of Sarajevo has moved from the suburbs to the King Alexander Street, and the famous 'sevdalinke'

can only be heard in a few cafés in the centre, or in private gatherings. The well-known 'Volga' is now a cabaret, the 'Šadrvan' is a tourist centre, occupied at the time of my visit by a troupe of barnstormers, and the curse of the radio has descended upon many of the most charming of the smaller cafés, where one hears stale Viennese waltzes or indifferent salon music in place of the lovely old Bosnian songs. Only in a few places and at the Moslem picnics can one still hear them at their best. Nowadays the best professional sevdalinka singers are in Belgrade, where their delicate art is being spoiled.

It is a pity. For the sevdalinkie were typical of Sarajevo. They are not in one sense Bosnian, for they are not folk-songs. They are a product of the rich and cultured Moslem life of the capital and a few larger towns. They have Serbo-Croat words and Oriental melodies. Many of them deal with events in the life of the city, still more with 'sevdah', the helpless love-yearning, bitter and fatalistic, of the Moslem. 'Od sevdaha gore jada nema' (there is no bitterer pang than sevdah) runs one of them, unless it be kara-sevdah, or black sevdah, when the mind is darkened, life seems useless, and the only way out is death. From these songs one may re-create old Sarajevo.

The great sun has veiled his face;  
Veiled his face in shame, to see  
How Omer-beg reproves his love.  
She has passed barefoot across the court,  
With loosened hair, passing Omer by,  
Without a lantern and without a servant  
And without permission of her lord.

Another tells of the love of a peasant and a Moslem lady, another rejoices in her young love riding proudly through the čaršija, another tells of a girl who died of longing for her love taken to far Anatolia, another of Ademkoda, the

young bride, who waters her bride-chest with her tears, for she is to wed a man she does not love. Yet another relates a wedding tragedy:

Ali-beg has quarrelled with his love  
That first night upon the silken cushions.  
He has bound her hands behind her, saying:  
'Tell me, love, who has been before me?'

While yet another is full of bitterness and revenge:

'The ravens hover  
Above Maglaj;  
Over Omer's tower,  
That mighty beg.'

Omer's love goes out  
And asks the ravens  
Over Maglaj:

'O ravens, tell me,  
Birds of ill-omen,  
Whence have you come?  
From what city?  
And did you see Omer,  
My lovely beg?'

Answered the ravens  
Above Maglaj:

'Hear us, true love  
Of Omer-beg!  
This morning we came  
Early from Doboj.  
We saw there Omer,  
Thy lovely beg.

He sits in the inn,  
Rakija drinking  
And wastes his ducats  
On dancing-girls.  
He loves those of Doboj  
More than thy youth.'

When the true love of  
Omer  
Heard these words  
She leapt from the window  
To earth below.  
But her dead lips spake:

'May God lay a curse  
On every girl  
Who wastes her youth  
In taverns and inns  
For foolish pleasure  
And sinful lust.'

So spoke the true love  
Of Omer-beg;  
And lived no more  
In her young beauty.

It is equally hard nowadays to find good Oriental dancers. But that is not the fault of Sarajevo, for the best dancers were usually imported. None the less, I managed to find my old friend Alegra at the Šadrvan.

Alegra is now getting on in years, and has been dancing since she was eight. She comes from Beirut, speaks all the languages of the Levant, and can be delightfully improper in a good many others. But her body is still lissom and graceful, and she has become famous as the best 'čoček' in Yugoslavia. In fact she told me that she has just bought a house in Belgrade.

Usually Turkish dancing, or, more vulgarly, belly-dancing, is an ungracious and repulsive series of wriggles by fat jelly-like women, who seem always to be slipping out of their trousers. I fear very much that is what the average visitor will see; I was myself treated to such an exhibition at the Janče Han in Skoplje. But it can be both beautiful and graceful, as well as grotesque, and this middle-aged red-haired Jewess has the personality to make it so. I am glad to know it; otherwise the raptures of the Arabic poets would be reduced to senile Semitic mouthings at repellent avoidupois.

Almost every muscle of the body is called into play, and, in really good dancing, the movements are slow and rhythmical like living sculpture. Naturally the stomach muscles play a great part, but a really skilful čoček can put a wealth of meaning even into this unpromising part of the body. But I do not recommend it to our ballet enthusiasts. They had better stick to Sheperazade.

Alegra told me, incidentally, that she had been asked to give lessons to a lady novelist. But the lady was thin, and hips and breasts and tummy must be trained to this difficult art from an early age. At last she gave up in despair:

'Mais, madame, vous n'avez pas de quoi!'

But I did not spend all my time in Mustafa's shop or in the kafanas. At the town hall, an impressive building in the Turkish bath style, I met the Moslem historian of Sarajevo, Hamdija Kreševljaković. He was at work on a monograph on the former fountains and waterworks of Sarajevo. Like a real scholar, he likes to verify his facts,

and had decided to trace down the site of every fountain and every stream mentioned in his work. In 1874, just before the Austrian occupation, there were sixty-eight different water-supply systems and a hundred and fifty-six public fountains, to say nothing of innumerable private ones. So he had his work cut out. I offered to accompany him.

The sites of most of those in the centre of the town were well known, so we spent most of our time in the outskirts, which are the most beautiful parts of Sarajevo. One morning we walked out to the café of Bendbasha on the Miljačka, and thence into the old fortress. Bendbasha means the 'last weir', and it was there that the timber merchants used to sit and wait for their logs which were rafted down the Miljačka. Each recognized his goods by his brand and carried on business in comfort, drinking coffee on the balconies overlooking the river. You may do that still, though there are no more rafts.

The fortress is comparatively recent in date, for in its great days Sarajevo was an open town far from the frontier. But it housed the most distinguished families, and still possesses the most beautiful Moslem homes, with wide latticed čardak-balconies and large gardens and beautifully wrought iron door-handles. It was a purely residential quarter, and there were no shops save the necessary bakers; for Moslem families mix their bread and cakes at home and send them to the public baker. Indeed, the absolute necessities for any Moslem quarter are a mosque, a fountain, and a baker's shop, and they are usually found close together. Jekovac is just above the market, and to its quiet streets the merchants used to retire after the day's work. Even now it is a perfect picture of a high-class Sarajevo suburb, a sort of Moslem Park Lane. The main street used to have a mountain stream running down the centre, driving twelve water-mills. At the top of the street, near the Yellow Bastion, is a most delightful kafana with terraces

overlooking the gorge of the Miljačka, and shaded by plum-trees and sweet-scented lindens.

In the afternoon we crossed to Bistrik on the other side of the Miljačka. Those steep winding streets were delightful. I did not regret the hours we spent there, poking into odd corners to find traces of former fountains.

We started up the hill along a paved road from near the Emperor's mosque. It was very steep and paved with huge stone blocks. Hamdija explained that it was the beginning of the Stambul Djol, the old military road to Constantinople, along which the Tatars carried messages to the Sultan in swift-footed relays. Post-couriers were known as Tatars long after the last of that race had disappeared from Bosnia.

He stopped for a moment to point out a graveyard to me. One of the surprising features of Sarajevo is the graveyards. You find them in the most unlikely places. There are graves in the public park, beside the main cinema, and in the centre of one of the principal streets. Often they are very small, with perhaps five or six turbaned headstones. Usually the graves are grass-grown and anonymous, with perhaps a sword to show the inmate was a janissary, or a text from the Koran. This one was more than usually desolate, and the memorials mostly simple blocks of uncarved stone.

'That was the strangers' graveyard,' said Hamdija. 'If a foreigner died in Sarajevo, he was buried here, and his friends knew where to find his grave.'

From the top of Hosein Breg is perhaps the finest view over Sarajevo, the most lovely city of the Balkans. There are eighty-six mosques left, some beautiful works of architecture like the Emperor's or the Beg's mosques, or those of Ghazi Ali-Pasha, or Čekrekčija Muslihuddin; others simple houses with stumpy wooden minarets. Before the sack and burning of Sarajevo by Prince Eugene of Savoy in 1697, there were still more. By great



good chance, however, some of the finest, being of stone, survived.

We wandered for hours around the narrow twisting streets of the quarter, noting down positions on a large-scale map, and chatting with elderly people who remembered the time of the occupation. Finally, Hamdija said he would call it a day, and rolled up the map. It was getting dark, and we were tired.

So we found a kafana near the Bistrik station and sat down for coffee.

'It should be good here,' said Hamdija. 'That fountain across the road was once famous through all Sarajevo for the quality of its water for making coffee. Real "meraklije" used to send their servants for it all the way from Jekovac,' and he pointed to the fortress-quarter on the steep bank across the river. It was.

Sarajevo is built at the spot where the gorge of the Miljačka begins to widen into a valley. But the city soon outgrew its limits, and sprawled contentedly on the steep mountain slopes on either side. The kafana we had chosen was high up on the Bistrik slope, just above the railway line to Little Stambul and Pale and, eventually, Belgrade. Below us the city lay spread out like a map. It was growing dusk, and the setting sun picked out the minarets, the white headstones of the cemeteries, and the clumps of tall poplars, turning them to shining silver and dark bronze. In the little wooden kiosks in the garden couples were chatting intently. There was a pleasant cool breeze from the mountains.

'Tomorrow,' said Hamdija, 'we shall go over there.'

'There' was the gypsy quarter, officially the quarter of Dajanli Osman-beg. It is cleaner than most gypsy quarters, the home of horse-copers and smiths and wild-looking women who shout after you 'to tell the cards'. The little houses are no longer quiet and secret, but wide open to the street. The gypsy does not want and does not understand privacy. All his life is open to

the most casual eye, and many of them sleep peacefully in the sunny alleys. Further, they do not bother one overmuch by begging; gypsies seldom do in their own quarters, though they are an infernal nuisance in the city. They are all Moslems. But Islam has not altered their happy-go-lucky style of life, and their women do not veil. But it has had one good effect. They keep, more or less, the rules of ritual ablution, and thus are cleaner than the average gypsy. And you may listen to all the songs you please.

But I could not stay too long in Sarajevo, though I would have liked to do so. There is material enough in it for a dozen books, and many lovely places around, such as Pale or Stamblić in the cool forests, the mountain peaks of Trebević and Bjelašnica, and the gay little spa of Ilidža, where in the summer there are still good singers of the *sevdalinke*. And in the city itself there is the District Museum, where the ethnographic section will give the visitor with little time at his disposal an excellent idea of Bosnia as a whole. Also the relics of Roman times and the memorials of the Bogumils. But my time was not as short as that. I like museums, but prefer to see for myself. Therefore, next morning, I took train for Jajce and the forest country.

## XV

### THE FOREST COUNTRY

THE main lines from Sarajevo to Belgrade and the sea crawl laboriously over high mountains; there are a hundred and fifty-four tunnels between Čačak and Dubrovnik. The main line to Brod, along which I travelled as far as Lašva, follows a fertile river valley, and has only one tunnel. It was like a release to move swiftly on a Bosnian railway.

It had rained during the night, but a little way out of Sarajevo the sky cleared, leaving the countryside fresh and green. For Bosnia is rich soil and dense forest, in contrast to the fantastic rock spires and pinnacles on the other side of Ivan Planina. The villages are built of tent-like wooden houses with shingled roofs. Mostly they are poor, for Bosnia was nobody's child from 1875 to 1918, and now, even when they have money, they have almost forgotten how to make intelligent use of it. The peasants are mixed Orthodox and Moslem, with occasional Catholic patches as one goes farther north, towards Croatia. Many of them are still backward and superstitious. But the stock is good, and the impetus given by the industrialization of Bosnia in the past few years, coupled with the work of the excellent Yugoslav school system, has done much to improve their lot, both spiritually and materially.

The towns are still largely Moslem, but not so cultivated and progressive as Sarajevo.

At Kakanj, the first of the industrial centres in Bosnia, we saw for the first time since Dubrovnik wild cherries, small and bitter, and very different from the fat and luscious fruit of the Sarajevo markets.

Till a few years ago, Bosnia lived largely by her forests,

with Italy as her best customer. But a combination of circumstances, in which the application of sanctions took a great share, crippled the forest industries, and more and more attention was given to the minerals in which Bosnia abounds. The present Government has been especially active in this, and now great industrial centres are springing up at Zenica, Vareš, Ljubija, and elsewhere. An English company is even working gold. But, as in the history of man, wood has given way to metal. The economic future of Bosnia is in her iron.

Not that wood has ceased to be important. Forestry will always bulk large in Bosnian economy, and a courageous effort has been made to reorganize the industry, the greater part of which is controlled by a semi-state company, the Šipad. The afternoon before I had called at their elaborate head office in Sarajevo and got permission to use their forest railways.

Our first important stop was at Visoko, an ancient and famous city, but not impressive from the railway line. It was the capital of the Illyrian tribe of the Desiati, who revolted against the Romans under their King Bato, and there has been found the largest Illyrian inscription yet known. Later it became the stronghold of the Bosnian ruler, Kulin Ban, and in the early fifteenth century the capital of the Bosnian kings, who dated their trading concessions to Venice and Dubrovnik from Visoko.

But little or nothing remains of the Visoko of before the Turkish conquest, save the ruins of the fortress, a medieval church, and some fine sarcophagi. Modern Visoko was founded by the Turks in or after 1463. It had at one time nine mosques, and was the most famous centre of the leather trade. Indeed, the sandals of Visoko are still valued, although the trade has declined, being still carried out according to the methods of the sixteenth century!

It would have been more interesting to stop there than at Lašva, where I had to wait a weary hour for my connec-

tion to Jajce, as the main-line train was late. There is a lovely poplar-fringed trout stream here, but little else.

From Lašva to Jajce the railway becomes once more typically Bosnian, that is to say, it pants and crawls over mountain passes with great wheezings and bellowings. As far as Travnik it follows the course of the Lašva.

The first sight of Travnik is, however, worth much weariness. One comes upon it suddenly around a bend of the Lašva valley, in which it is built. It was for many years the seat of the Bosnian vezirs, who made it beautiful and, although it was badly damaged by fire some thirty-five years ago, it is still beautiful. A rapid glimpse reveals houses of the finest period of Bosnian Moslem architecture, luxuriant gardens filled with fruit trees, and a tremendous fortress built by the Bosnian kings. The peasants, too, in the station were wearing an interesting costume, black and white striped gaiters, long white linen trousers under short white skirts, and stiff linen coifs, like nuns. Unfortunately I had not time to ask them if they were from Travnik itself, and, if so, of what religion.

I think, then, that I must have dozed. The train was hot, the motion soporific, and the air heavy with the scent of trees and flowers after recent rain. When I woke, we were near Donji Vakuf, stertorously climbing the rack railway over the Komar Pass, 2,500 feet above sea-level, with an engine fore and aft. On these rack railways one travels like the Israelites, between columns of smoke by day and pillars of fire by night.

Jajce is one of the most strikingly beautiful cities of Yugoslavia. But I should not like to live with that beauty before my eyes. The canvas is overcharged. There is no feeling of rest. It would be like living in a small room with a Rubens.

It is built on a conical hill, with the castle of Hrvoje Vukčić on the summit. Just outside the walls, the picturesque Bosnian houses clamber up the slopes, their dark

tent-like shapes broken by a lovely Venetian campanile of the church of St. Luke, a few minarets, and the squat form of the 'Bear Tower'. Around the hill flows the river Pliva in a series of picturesque cascades, which culminate in a terrific waterfall where the Pliva descends into the narrow canyon of the Vrbas. It is astounding, but uneasy.

Incidentally, it must be one of the most photographed places in the world.

I went at once to the station of the forest railway, for the company had told me that one of their officials would accompany me. There I met a set-back. The train left Jajce only on Sundays and Thursdays, and it was now Monday. But the station-master made light of it.

'No matter. We will send a special train for you. That will be much better. Also, you will not have to get up so early.'

It certainly was much better. But it was a solution I had not expected. Yugoslav hospitality has few limits. The station-master would call for me next morning.

That left me free to explore Jajce, and it is worth exploring. Though its greatness was limited to a bare hundred years, it had, in that time, managed to collect about it a cloud of legend. For it was the last stronghold of the Bosnian kingdom, the last desperate stand of the Slavs to maintain an independent state, before they succumbed to the long centuries of Ottoman rule. The site was occupied in Neolithic and Roman times, but it does not seem to have had any special significance before the Bosnian Ban, Hrvoje Vukčić (1391-1404), built the fortress here. This was the same Hrvoje who was lord of Split, and whom the canons of that city cursed as Pharaoh. It seems that he was a Bogumil, or at least tolerated that creed, and his life and that of his successors was taken up in continual struggles against the Hungarians, which weakened their resistance to the victorious Turks.

Here, too, lived and was executed the last King of

Bosnia, Stjepan Tomašević, in 1463. He was a weak-kneed sort of character, but his death has lent him a sort of halo. Legend has it that he was executed by the Turkish leader in person, who excused the treachery by which he succeeded in capturing him by the words: 'Only a fool gets bitten twice by a snake from the same hole.'

The Bosnian kingdom may seem of little importance to us now. But it bulked large in its day. Despite its heresy, the Doge of Venice wrote to Pope Pius II: 'Before our eyes, the richest kingdom of the world is burning', while Mathias Corvinus, who contributed very greatly to its downfall, referred to it as the 'harbour of Christianity'. The Turks, too, realized the value of their conquest. After the peace of Karlovci, they refused to exchange the war-devastated Bosnian March for rich lands in Wallachia. 'These towns,' they said, 'are the gateway to Constantinople.' Certainly they were the gateway to Sarajevo.

I am not a Rotarian, but several times on my journey I had been the guest of various Rotary Clubs. One of them had given me an introduction to the manager of the Jajce Electricity Works, Mr. Schleimer. Despite his name, he is not a German but a Slovene. In him I found a real friend and an enthusiastic archaeologist. He was especially proud of the Mithraeum which has been found and excavated at Jajce, largely by his initiative. And it is indeed interesting. It is the only Mithraeum that I have seen where traces of the original colour can still be seen on the reliefs. Curiously enough, not a single readable inscription was found here, but excavations at Šipovo (? Scipio) near Jajce have proved that the Xth Legion was quartered nearby.

The 'catacombs' of Hrvoje Vukčić seem to have a spiritual affinity with the Mithraeum. What on earth induced him to hew a church and mausoleum out of the solid rock of the citadel, when he had above ground one

of the most splendid sites in Europe is almost beyond comprehension. But there it is. One descends into a chapel of considerable size, and then still lower into a vault with empty recesses and a large altar. Apparently he was challenged by death before he had finished his preparations for meeting it. At any rate, the work is unfinished, and the walls undecorated save for the Vukčić coat of arms near the door, and some Bogumil symbols over the main altar. But it is awesome in its dank solidity, and must have been even more so before the municipality put in a few feeble electric bulbs. It is also very cold. After the heat of the summer day outside, the vault was like a refrigerator.

It is curious why a man like Vukčić should have chosen this chilly cavern for his family tomb. Most men of his period and power would have demanded display; but here it is even far from easy to find the entrance. But the Bogumils were a curious sect. Perhaps there was in his mind some analogy with the early days of the persecuted Church. At all events, his 'catacomb' would have made a perfect Mithraeum.

But one thing in Jajce disappointed me. Only a few years ago the Pliva used to drive a whole battery of water-mills just below the main street of the city. They were beautiful and picturesque, as well as practical. Every one took photos of them, and I myself used one in a previous book on Yugoslavia. Two or three were particularly interesting, for the blades were arranged in a circular form like a sort of peasant turbine.

Now, alas, they are no more. In 1932 a series of earthquakes shook Jajce. There were twenty-three of them, one after the other, and though the city itself suffered little or no damage, there was a landslide on the banks of the Pliva, and a couple of thousand cubic metres of earth fell into the stream and altered its course. Now the water-mills are high and dry, absurdly perched on tall wooden stilts, and looking ridiculously pathetic so far



from their native element. Nowadays they are deserted, and it is only a question of a year or two before they collapse.

I was just going to add that Jajce is a perfect example of a medieval Bosnian city. But it is not so medieval after all; modernism has set even here its cloven foot. A kafana by the river, advertising its cheapness, has called itself: 'Kafana Demping (Dumping)'!

As far as Jajce there are excellent roads and a good motor-bus service, which continues along the gorge of the Vrbas to Banja Luka, where the normal railway system again commences. But the country into which I was now going is ill served by communications, and is the most primitive and ill-developed of all districts of Yugoslavia, except the Homolje mountains of East Serbia. In a few years, when the new Adriatic line and the Una river line are completed, this will be remedied, and doubtless many other of these beautiful little Bosnian cities will become tourist centres, with good hotels as at Jajce. For the moment, it is not to be recommended.

This is not altogether the fault of the Yugoslavs. Much money is needed to develop a devastated district, and the Bosnian March may truly be so described. It was for centuries the battlefield of the fierce soldiers of the Croatian military frontiers and of the Martolossi, which were the Ottoman equivalent. Life and property were insecure, and the people brutish and depraved. Now it is getting better; but convalescence is always the longest part of any illness.

I have, on the whole, drawn a fairly favourable picture of Ottoman rule. In fact, it was for centuries very much better than the Yugoslav historians like to describe it. Even now there are peasants of the older generation who regret its swift, if unequal, justice and its clearly-defined code of privileges and duties. But when the central authority weakened, whether at Stambul or Sarajevo, the local begs and spahis got out of hand and ruled with



A SELLER OF 'BOZA,' A TEMPERANCE DRINK



the worst excesses of the feudal system. Each section of the Empire did much as it pleased, and, although there were a few wise and tolerant men like Mustafa Pasha, 'the Mother of the Serbs', the Ottoman pashas and valis for the most part became drunk with power and misused it horribly. Those appointed by Stambul only thought to get rich quickly before they were replaced by a richer or more cunning intriguer, while those who had become more or less independent only thought to consolidate their position. The pashas of Janjina, Skadar, or Vidin ruled like independent princes; the begs of Sarajevo changed vezirs almost at their will, while the murder of Mustafa Pasha by the Belgrade janissaries led to a period of oppression that was one of the chief causes of the insurrection of Karageorge and the eventual liberation of the Serbian people. In Bosnia and the Hercegovina, the extortions of the tax-gatherers led to a series of revolts, culminating in the Nevesinje insurrection of 1875, the direct cause of the Austrian occupation.

Several English people wrote of Bosnia in those days, whose honesty and personal knowledge give one no reason to doubt their facts, which tally only too well with German and Yugoslav authorities. Miss Irby and Miss Mackenzie did their best to educate the children of the 'raja' in Sarajevo, and left a moving account of their struggles and the condition of the provinces. Sir Arthur Evans, the famous archaeologist, walked through the country at the actual time of the Nevesinje revolt, and his book *Through Bosnia and Hercegovina on Foot during the Insurrection* (Longmans, Green, 1877) describes the condition of the people, and remains the best sketch of Bosnian history which has yet appeared in English. The terrible punishment of impalement was too ghastly for Victorian stomachs; I am afraid it is still too ghastly to describe in detail. Suffice it to say, that the living victim was spitted on a sharp stake, which entered the body at the crotch of the legs and emerged about the

back of the neck. In this condition he might if tough, and the Serbs and Bosnians are tough, linger on for several days. Of more usual methods he writes more freely:

'The Zaptiehs, the factotums of the Turkish officials, are immediately quartered on the villages' (for non-payment of extortionate dues) 'and live on them, insult their wives, and ill-treat their children. With the aid of these gentry, all kinds of personal tortures are applied to the recalcitrant. In the heat of summer men are stripped naked, and tied to a tree smeared over with honey or other sweet stuff, and left to the tender mercies of the insect world. For winter extortion it is found convenient to bind people to stakes and leave them barefooted to get frostbitten; or at other times they are thrust into a pig-sty and cold water poured on them. A favourite plan is to drive a party of rayahs (Christian peasants) up a tree or into a chamber and then smoke them with green wood. Instances are recorded of Bosniac peasants being buried up to their heads, and left to repent at leisure.'

It is little wonder then that the Bosnian peasant became suspicious and brutish, so that the Turks themselves said: *Krk Bošnjak bir adam*—forty Bosnians one man. It is a great tribute to his character that today he is, for the most part, hospitable and good-humoured towards strangers, though still slower-witted than his Serb or Croat kinsmen. I have heard some of these tales from men whose fathers and mothers had to undergo such tortures. The ingenious gentlemen who write such literature as *The Pleasures of the Torture-Chamber* would do well to investigate the past of Bosnia. It is also little wonder that the Bosnian regiments were the most reckless and ferocious of the former Austro-Hungarian army, and were the terror of the Italians on the Piave front.

These pleasing gentry also left a trail of hereditary disease in some of the villages that is only now being stamped out. However, let me add that no tourist is ever likely to find himself in these districts.

But enough of these horrid details; they explain much that is otherwise difficult to explain in the Bosnian March.

The station-master came next morning to tell me that my special train had arrived. It consisted of a forestry inspection coach, divided into two compartments, one for sleeping, the other with chairs and a table, and it had a little observation platform back and front. For the first part of the journey he would come with me himself; then an engineer from Šipad would accompany me.

The first part of the journey was along the shores of the Lake of Pliva. Although it is mentioned in all the guide-books, it is difficult of access, and few people have actually been there. But it is evident that its calm forest-bordered beauty will, sooner or later, make it a popular tourist resort. Also it is very rich in trout. But at the moment there is only a tiny inn at the distant village of Jezero (meaning 'lake'), and one or two villages with the typical wooden houses and the occasional stone-built tower of some former beg. Now, it is lovely in its untroubled solitude; but it needs little imagination to see it with comfortable hotels along its shores, good bathing-places, and many boatloads of happy tourists on its still waters. I was told there were mosquitoes, but I neither saw nor heard one myself.

Jezero used to be the main market of Jajce, but is now unimportant. One or two of the very few remaining Turks (real Turks, I mean, not Moslem Slavs) still live there.

Henceforward, for two days' journey all is wood. We are entering the forest country.

I sat pleasantly drowsing on the observation platform, watching the rails stretch out interminably behind us. The country here is pleasant and fertile, and, despite the Moslem element, cultivated in the Western manner. It is rolling downland, rather like the English Midlands. Just beyond Sipovo, we left the valley of the Pliva and began to climb. Below was the source of the Pliva, split

into a dozen streams, each with a water-mill straddling the current. We were now at a height of about two thousand feet, and looked down on the valley as from an aeroplane. It is wonderful country, but as yet scarcely touched by the desultory cultivation of a few villages.

Perhaps we lay too much stress on comfort. These Bosnian villages are not really as bad as they are described; those who say they are unfit to live in are transferring to Bosnia the ideas of modern England. Considering their history, this is not fair. They should be compared with the villages of the Wars of the Roses; then they could stand the comparison.

The station-master, drowsy with the heat and the rocking of the tiny train, fell asleep. He also nearly fell off the observation platform. When I grabbed the collar of his coat, he woke with a start and looked about him vaguely to get his bearings. We were now in a country of heather, while just before us rose the blackish green wall of the primitive forest. Soon we were running through its giant avenues.

Looking back at the forest, the light plays strange tricks with one's eyes. The nearby forests seem green and friendly, but the trees of the more distant hillsides as we retreated from them seemed to follow us, closing in upon us in threatening rows. I can quite understand primitive man who peopled the forest with nymphs and demons. Only the occasional red of a tree rather like a rowan broke the dark monotony of the green, through which the line ran for mile upon mile with scarcely a sign of man or villages.

Everything is wood here. Even our engine was burning wood and filling hair and eyes with ash. This is no journey for a hairy man. An Orthodox priest would soon look like an ash-pile. Still, it is not so unpleasant as the soft sulphurous coal of the passenger lines.

Čardak was nothing but a station with huge piles of cut timber. Mlinište little more, save that one of the rare

roads crossed the line here and there was a tiny inn. There is no chance for towns or villages to grow, for, despite the dense virgin forests—they have not been cut since medieval times, if then—there is no water in these highlands. Every drop has to be brought in tanks from Drvar, fifty kilometres away. When there is a forest fire, it is almost impossible to put it out.

Now, in July, the forest was still fresh and green. But in August it is parched and dry, and every railway journey is a danger, lest some stray spark catch the timber. Then the larger trees, some of them nearly a hundred feet high, flame up like gigantic torches.

The railway, naturally, is built through the densest forest. Every few miles an exploitation line branches off, and high piles of stacked timber lie by the track, awaiting transport to the mills at Drvar. It was built during the war, partly to ensure more rapid forest exploitation, partly to provide an alternative route for troop movements, for the Brod line was threatened by the Serbs, and the Lika line had not yet been built. Therefore it is more solidly built than an ordinary forest line.

At Potoci—the name means ‘water-brooks’, but there seem to be none there—our little engine showed its worth by picking up 180 tons of cut timber for Srnetica. The line now was more or less level. Such a load would have been impossible on the steep gradients from Pliva.

The line follows the upper slopes of the Grmeč mountains, and now and again we caught a glimpse of a village in some valley a thousand feet or more below us, so encircled by the mountains that it might have served Wells for his *Country of the Blind*. How do the people of such villages live? They have absolutely no communication with the outer world, save for the talk of the young men back from military service. There are no towns near, and even those which may be reached by the forest railway are tiny one-horse places. To go to Banja Luka



or Zagreb would seem to them more terrifying than a week-end in Moscow or Peking to us. There are some men and many women there who have never seen a train or a motor-car, though they may perhaps have glimpsed a cruising aeroplane.

Even Srnetica, where I was to spend the night, was not a town but merely a collection of small houses belonging to the Šipad employees, and a railway repair yard. It lies in a clearing made by a forest fire, in a hollow of forested, mist-wreathed mountains. I slept in the station and ate in the canteen. I can quite understand the number of forestry employees who get persecution mania and do mad things. A short while ago one of them ran amok, killed two members of the Skupština, and wounded the director of the Šipad railway. There is nothing much even to drink. A self-centred character can do nothing but withdraw into himself and brood. The normal amusements seem to be reading week-old newspapers and spitting over the fence. The horror nemorum is not dead.

Next day I took the daily passenger train to Prijedor, but, by the hospitality of Šipad, still retained my private coach. For the first half of the journey it is rather like that from Jajce, till one descends into the valley of the Sana, down which logs used to be floated to the mills at Dobrlin, until it was found that exploitation was outstripping afforestation and they were closed. The mountains all around are marked with long white scars like knife-cuts, the remains of peasant flumes. On the Klekovača the ardent mountaineer may find edelweiss in plenty.

The Sana runs into the Sava, and is the beginning of the fertile plains, with their rich fields of corn and maize. From here north there are no more mountains worth mentioning. The people, too, are more easygoing, and the Moslems become outnumbered by the Christians.

At Prijedor I stopped for the night. It was once a very

important market town, and is still celebrated in a folk-song commencing:

How great is the Prijedor market!  
Where my lovely Fata walks. . . .

Now, it is not very interesting. The fortress is still picturesque, surrounded by the waters of the Sana as by a moat, and the minarets have a style of their own. Some of the little kafanas, too, are charming. But the accommodation is lousy—probably literally. I slept once more in the Šipad railway station.

## XVI

### TRAPPISTS AND TURKS: BANJA LUKA

I HAD a dreadful headache when I arrived at Banja Luka. The night before, at Prijedor, I had been sitting late with one of the local judges and had drunk more rakija than was good for me. Rakija is not for serious drinking; but the wines of Bosnia are poor.

But, none the less, Banja Luka was hospitable. I soon found friends enough to forget my headache, and it was a treat to find a really comfortable hotel after the various makeshifts of the last few days.

Until a few years ago, Banja Luka was not a very important place. That it was for a time the residence of the Bosnian vezirs did not help it very much. They never beautified it as they did Travnik. But when the country was divided into banovinas, it became the capital of the Vrbas province, and new government buildings, a theatre, and a somewhat grandiose Orthodox cathedral were built. Today, the modern part of Banja Luka is clean and pleasant.

There is also an interesting little museum, with examples of costumes and handicrafts from all parts of the province, which is well worth seeing.

As regards the city itself, it is not of great interest, save for the mosque of Ferhad Pasha, one of the most beautiful in all Yugoslavia, which was built by that pasha with the fifty thousand ducats of ransom that he obtained for his distinguished prisoner, Count Aeursperg, after the defeat of the Austrians here in 1737. There are also some very lovely little kafanas by the Vrbas, opposite the remains of the fortress.

It is largely due to the Polish consul that I got to know something more of Banja Luka. He is a breeder

of carp on a large scale, with fish-ponds at Razboj and Prijedor, and has lived in Banja Luka nearly twenty years. We at once found a common interest in his love of Siamese cats.

The first evening we went out to Gornji Šeher, the summer residence of the former begs and notables of Banja Luka. It is a Moslem village, with many kafanas on the river's edge, and it is delightful to sit there and watch the twin minarets, one on each side of the Vrbas, gradually melt into the twilight, till at last they seem like ghostly white fingers pointing upwards through the darkness, as if eternally witnessing the glory of Allah. The song of the night crickets mingled with the hum of the Vrbas, and a young man at the next table began singing *sevdalinke* in a light reedy tenor. One of them told of the widow of Čafer-aga, who indignantly refused the advances of the vali of Banja Luka: 'Since Banja Luka first was built, never was there a lovelier widow. . . .'

Next day the consul was going out to his fish-ponds at Razboj and asked me to join him.

The road between Banja Luka and the Sava is not interesting. The country is a part of the Sava valley, which is rich but monotonous. Only where the great river itself ennobles it, is it beautiful. The villages, too, are undistinguished. But the people are interesting.

They are nearly all colonists, either Orthodox Serbs brought by the begs as labourers, or more recent Catholic Croats and Germans, brought by the religious orders. They have, therefore, little or no sense of Bosnia as a unit, and still have a certain serf mentality. This last shows itself in refusing to say anything displeasing. If one is walking ten or twelve miles from one's destination, a peasant will tell you that it is 'not much farther than the next corner'. A few days before there had been a most terrific storm of rain and hail, which had flattened out the crops and done immense damage. When we asked a peasant about it, he replied hesitatingly:

'Well, we did have rain, but, saving your presence, it was as if dew fell.'

These people, having no historical connection with Bosnia, know nothing of its traditions. The average Serb, and a good many Croats, will gladly tell you stories about Dušan the Mighty, Marko Kraljević, or the pious Tsar Lazar. These worthies of the fourteenth century are, thanks to the wonderful heroic ballads, as live to him as if they had lived yesterday. Such legends as they know of their own countryside are either connected with the far-distant Byzantine rulers or with the Moslem begs or the Croato-Hungarian kings. Of Tvrtko, Kulin Ban, Hrvoje Vukčić or Stjepan Tomašević, who were equally great figures in their day, they know absolutely nothing. Also, though the country has been for more than sixty years under Christian rule, the feeling of Moslem superiority still exists.

The fish-ponds were extraordinarily interesting. They consist of about five hundred hectares of marsh-land, converted into five small shallow lakes by dikes, which in the course of years have become thickly overgrown with willows, reeds, and bulrushes. The carp likes muddy water, and the pools were thick with plancton and various water-plants and covered with dense patches of water-lilies. It was warm, almost hot, to the touch. Now and again a brownish swirl of mud showed where a carp had been rooting, and as we approached silently in our boat we could see it hasten away, leaving a trail of ripples. The fish are a special variety brought from Poland, and he sells them, alive, as far afield as Palestine.

These quiet, silent pools have all the melancholy beauty of the Fens. While the consul and his manager were talking technically about the feeding of fish and taking samples of the water to estimate the percentage of plancton, I was perfectly happy to lie in the bows of the boat, watching the changing colours of the waters and the willow-fringed banks. In the main pool there

were a number of fish-traps, where we caught and examined fat carp, estimating weight and growth before setting them again free to increase and multiply. They are melancholy beasts; I could not help thinking of the poem of Guillaume Appolinaire, and quoted it to the consul, who was delighted.

Dans vos viviers, dans vos étangs,  
Carpes, vous vivez longtemps.  
Est-ce que la mort vous oublie,  
Poissons de la mélancholie?

The shallow waters were, also, the home of countless waterfowl, wild duck, storks, and herons. The storks stalked solemnly around, secure and fearless. No Yugoslav will touch a stork, and sometimes, on the Sava or Danube marshes, one can see huge flocks of four or five hundred of them together. A stork flying against the sunset, with wide ragged wings and lumbering flight, has all the charm of a Japanese print of the best period. The manager shook his fist, however, at the herons, for they are bitter enemies of his beloved fish. He also told me that at certain seasons there are many spoonbills here, perhaps from the neighbouring bird-sanctuary of Obedska Bara. I have read in an English periodical of good repute a distinguished ornithologist stating that the spoonbill is rarely found in Europe, and then only in certain districts in Albania. It is not true. Spoonbills are regular guests along the Sava.

We returned by way of the peasant spa of Slatina, one of several of that name in Yugoslavia. The whole country is rich in mineral springs of every description, some of them world-famous, as Rogaška Slatina, others merely a few sheds for the local peasants. It is a good thing, for the heavy cuisine makes for stomach diseases. Almost every middle-aged Yugoslav goes to one or other of these spas for an annual cure, and usually brings his wife and children with him. So they have become social

centres, and a great deal of match-making goes on. They are always full of life and gaiety and good spirits.

So I felt the contrast more strongly when we stopped at Our Lady of the Star, the largest Trappist monastery in Europe. It is famous throughout Yugoslavia for the quality of its cheese and beer.

My ideas of the Trappists had been derived almost entirely from *The Garden of Allah*. Therefore it was with surprise that I found the monastery wide and welcoming. It is exceedingly large and exceedingly rich, and, though its inmates keep the ferocious Trappist rule with great strictness, they are by no means merely contemplative ascetics, but have done very much to improve the countryside, building not only their famous dairies and brewery, but also mills and an electric-light plant.

The story of its foundation is romantic. In 1869 the Trappist father Franjo Pfanner obtained formal permission from the Sultan to buy land in the Empire. But the pasha of Bosnia refused to believe, and even when it was confirmed from Sarajevo, the Moslems of Banja Luka put every difficulty in his way, being ashamed that their city should first sell land to the giaour. The first seller was forced by public opinion to revoke his contract, and eventually the Trappist fathers bought their land from a Serb merchant.

Even so, they dared not erect a monastery, but had to hide their real intention from the Turks. The pasha considered the building too big and strong for raja, and again intervened. But Father Pfanner concealed beneath his godliness a talent for intrigue. Little by little he wheedled extra concessions from the Turks until the monastery was an established fact. He even managed to acquire a bell, strictly forbidden by Turkish law, and imported it in a vat of wine. During a great drought he offered the prayers of his monks for rain, and was, rather surprisingly, accepted. But he said they could only pray

effectively if summoned by a bell; so he obtained permission to ring his bell, 'but only until rain fell'. But he continued the practice even after the drought broke, and the pasha no longer interfered. The present magnificent buildings, however, date from 1913.

I have never fully been able to understand why God should be the better pleased by the denial of natural functions. But I will say that these Trappists have acquired a sense of calm and balance that must compensate largely for the lack of human intercourse with their fellows. Perhaps the soul really does get purified by their self-imposed denials, though I should have thought it more praiseworthy to acquire this peace after openly acknowledging the limitations of flesh and spirit. But there are some great scholars amongst them, though by virtue of their rule I could not speak to them, and with their ideal of self-sacrifice for the good of others I am in whole-hearted sympathy, the more so as I could not follow it myself. '*Video meliora proboque. . .*'

I was also pleased to hear that no man is forced to take the strictest vows until he has passed through a long novitiate. So that, after all, the psychology of the 'Garden of Allah' is at fault. I can understand that, once the rule is accepted, it would grow to be almost a necessity of life.

But I do not admire their taste in art. The new church of the monastery is a tremendous affair, if only by virtue of its solidity, its enormous size, and its prevailing white colour. It was designed by the German church artist, Diamant of Munich, brother of the present abbot, and is in the heavy modern German ecclesiastic style. Its massiveness and use of any material save the obvious one oppresses me horribly, and the inhuman efficiency of everything, the neat cubicles and ordered cupboards, makes one think more of a barrack than a temple. But there is no denying its force and its impressiveness. I found myself murmuring: '*Terribilis est locus iste. . .*'



## XVII

### ZAGREB

**I**T was on the day of St. Florijan, the patron of firemen, that I last went to Zagreb. The day was overcast, but the sun shone brightly in the intervals between the clouds. There was a procession, led by the priests, followed by men in old-time uniforms with long curved swords and fur-trimmed capes—Panduri. The people of Zagreb love dressing up.

It started from the old church of St. Mark, that church in the Upper City with the gorgeously coloured tiled roof. Before it was the stone on which Matija Gubec, leader of the peasants' revolt, is said to have suffered for championing the cause of the people against the feudal nobles. He was crowned there with a red-hot crown, seated on a red-hot throne, after tortures unspeakable. One of the church dignitaries assisting is said to have gone mad, and eventually died, crying out: 'Blood, blood, blood! . . .'

By present-day standards the programme of Matija Gubec was not unreasonable. It boiled down to 'the land for the peasants and the abolition of serfdom'. But for the seventeenth century it was too radical. His men got out of hand and committed excesses; nothing, however, comparable to those of the nobles against him. His peasant army was soon routed, and himself captured.

Time, however, brings its own revenges. Today, Matija Gubec is a national hero, and memorials to him have been formally unveiled by distinguished popular leaders.

A pertinent professor informed me that Matija Gubec was probably not burned here, but before the cathedral. However, it doesn't matter. Legend has it that he was

burned here, and legend is sometimes more important than fact.

It is a very pleasant place, this Upper City. Its palaces are those of the old Croat nobility and history is in all its stones. The palace of Baron Rauch is now the mayoral offices. The noise and bustle of modern Zagreb are far below, in the Jelačić Square and along the Ilica, whither one descends by a primitive funicular. To get there by car one must climb the steep road through the Kamenita Vrata, the Stone Gateway, a favourite shrine, where your vehicle will pass through the smoke of a thousand candles flickering before holy pictures, and amongst peasants and townswomen kneeling before the Madonna. From the Štrosmajer Alley, one may look out over the modern city of Zagreb below, with its modern hotels and busy, tree-lined squares stretching in well-ordered lines to the open space before the station. Immediately below one, in the Jelačić Square, the great Croatian Ban still stretches an avenging sword towards rebel Hungary. Crowds of pigeons coo gently on that sword, and the young people of Zagreb make rendezvous 'under the tail' of his charger.

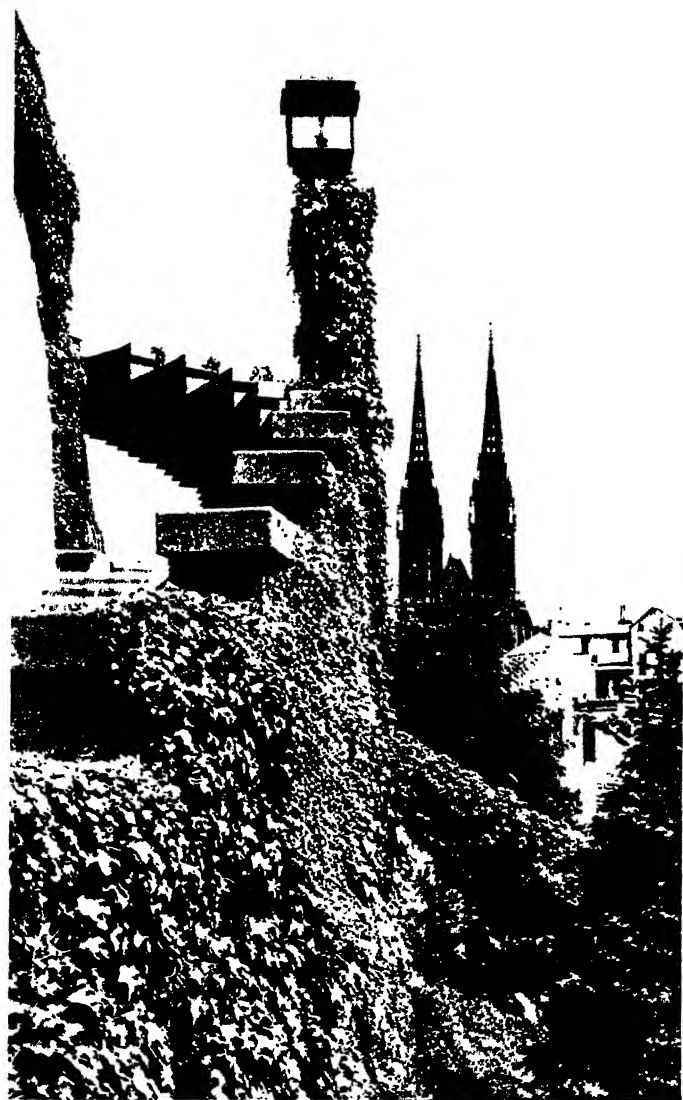
I walked back towards the Church of St. Mark. I remembered its interior as somewhat frowzy and uninteresting. But now it has been renovated, and the decoration placed in the hands of two of the greatest Yugoslav artists, Ivan Meštrović, the sculptor, and Joso Kljaković, the painter. The result has been excellent. The church even seems to have grown in size, as it has certainly improved in appearance. The pseudo-Gothic monstrosities of Bolle have been removed and replaced by a simple and dignified modernism. Over the main altar is the marvellous wooden crucifix by Meštrović which caused such a sensation when exhibited in London just after the war. It is untraditional in style, but deeply religious in feeling. There is also a fine relief in stone of St. Mark, patron of the church, and a beautiful 'pieta'

in wax. The St. Mark is Meštrović at his very best, unlaboured and with deep feeling. The evangelist is sitting with a book upon his knee and pen poised to continue working. His face is calm and yet concentrated, as if trying to recall the exact words and deeds of his divine Master to enter in the evangel.

The frescoes of Kljaković are extraordinarily interesting. Perhaps he has been a little influenced by Meštrović; the angel at the mouth of the tomb is sculptural in force and feeling. Yet one does not get the impression of copy, but of sensitive collaboration. But what is more interesting to the ordinary observer is that Kljaković has interpreted the story of Christ as a Croatian peasant story. The faces and the costumes are those of Croatian peasants.

One may see the face of the Madonna any day, reflected in the young peasant mothers who come in from the villages to sell their handicrafts on the Jelačić Square, and one may surprise the looks of deep devotion and the characteristic attitudes of the worshipping shepherds at any village festival during the procession of the Host. After all, the Christ legend is universal to the Christian peoples, and it is very moving to see it interpreted in terms of the people of everyday life that one may see around one on the squares and in the villages. It is far better than a false antiquarianism or a slavish copy of older masters, who, after all, did the same thing themselves. The people of the great Serb frescoes of the Middle Ages are the people of that place and time; while the Italian masters always used the material that was to their hand.

The whole church impressed me very deeply. It has a poetry of devotion that, among modern churches, I have also found in the little Rumanian church at Vršac, where a Rumanian painter whose name I do not know has interpreted the story of Christ with the types and costumes of his own people. He has the same feeling as Kljaković, but not his mastery of technique. Incidentally,



ZAGREB : FROM THE ŠTROSMAJER ALLEY



there is a self-portrait of the artist in the fresco of the Golden Calf.

The crucifix of Meštrović has come in for a good deal of criticism, most of it ill-informed or spiteful. Certainly it is a departure from the simpering figure of tradition. But so much to the good. If Christ did not suffer, there was no reason for His sacrifice. No one can imagine the fat and fleshy figure of the Baroque crucifixes praying in agony to let the Cup pass from Him.

At first the peasants were uncertain and unwilling to worship before this tortured and pain-scarred figure. But now they have become used to it, and when I entered there were as many worshippers as one would expect on the feast-day of a comparatively unimportant saint. Meštrović, it is said, used often to come here himself, and was never offended by the sincere criticism of the peasants, or the reasoned criticism of the intelligent. But criticism that was neither the one nor the other angered him. The parish priest once ventured to criticize the figure, but all he could find to say was:

'Well, it isn't exactly liturgical.'

Then Meštrović was really angry. What, in God's name, is a liturgical Christ?

I find it difficult to make up my mind about Zagreb. It is a cultivated city, a proud city, and, in its way, a capital. Yet it has something provincial about it. In no other large city have I come across such clique bitterness. If you ask about some distinguished artist, painter, or writer, nine times out of ten you will get the answer:

'I used to know him well so and so many years ago. But we are not on speaking terms now.'

Of course, if he is a politician, it is a hundred times worse!

It is a pity. For it means that the undoubted abilities and energies of Zagreb are being wasted in petty squabbles. It means that the city of Yugoslavia, which talks most about democracy, is the least democratic. In this,

it is rather like Dublin. Indeed, the spiritual attitudes of the two cities are curiously the same.

I came across this mania in its acutest form when I tried to meet Miroslav Krleža, the greatest living Croatian, perhaps even Yugoslav, writer. Finally, I simply rang him up myself, explained who I was, and asked for an appointment.

We met in the Café Esplanade, and I was surprised. One never gets used to finding writers totally unlike their books. He seemed cordial but unaccountably shy, a large man with the look of a *bon viveur*.

His books, on the other hand, are bitter and satiric, with a biting fury at the futilities and vanities of aristocratic Zagreb, now falling into pieces in decadence and display. His plays are almost pathological in the nervous hysteria of their characters, who seem to carry on their shoulders all the weight of a dying feudalism. He is the Croatian pendant to the Serbian satirist, Branislav Nušić. Only where Krleža kills by mordant ridicule, Nušić kills equally effectively with a brutal humour. Krleža uses a poisoned rapier, and Nušić a peasant cudgel. Krleža attacks a decayed aristocracy and Nušić a bumptious plutocracy. Yet these two men can always be sure of full houses, whether at Zagreb or Belgrade. Other dramatists come and go, by fortune, favour, or fashion. Only these two hold the stage, each by his own method. One comes away from a Krleža play feeling that one has been picking at the foundations of society, but that something better may possibly be built on the devastated site. One comes from a Nušić play rocking with laughter and feeling that the new society is as full of fools and fancies as the old. It is perhaps a pity that Belgrade should judge Zagreb by Krleža, or Zagreb Belgrade by Nušić. But at least each city has the courage to laugh at its own faults also. What would London be, if we were judged only by Noel Coward?

But some of the best of the aristocratic tradition still

lingers about Zagreb. For one thing, it has the best opera in Yugoslavia. It has also fine art galleries and museums, and, in the old quarters, an air of cultured ease. One of the best galleries, the Modern Gallery, is in a Hapsburg palace. There is evidence in it of tradition and a deep feeling for the arts. But, as always in Yugoslavia, the sculpture is far finer than the painting, which smells too much of Paris and post-war Vienna. One of the older generation, Rački, is strangely reminiscent of Blake. And, of course, there is always the Meštrović gallery, which needs no introduction.

Zagreb is also a city with a very mixed population. When I think of the Croats, I think more of the people of the villages and the sea-coast than of Zagreb. On the corso in the evenings, or in the crowded cafés, one hears much German and not a little Hungarian. There is also a large Jewish population. But it says much for the innate good sense and toleration of the Croats, qualities not always apparent in their actions, that there is little anti-Jewish feeling. Most of what there is, is probably economic in origin.

Zagreb, too, has many of the graces of a city with a great tradition. You may find there first-class bookshops, good music, good wine, and many men of taste and learning, though they live for the most part in too reserved a way to influence the city as they should. Some of the old Croat families are decadent, the subject-matter of a Krleža, but others are still the salt of their earth which has not lost its savour. Life here can be more cultivated and leisurely than in new and violent Belgrade. The metropolis, by the nature of things, must be the main centre of new development, but that does not lessen the role of Zagreb. It is and, if it can get rid of its absurd jealousies, will remain the cultural capital of Yugoslavia, even as we hope, when the present madness has died down a little, Vienna may become the cultural capital of Germany. Each has much to give to its country and



its people. The parallel indeed goes yet deeper. But the under-shades each must discern for himself.

But the real Croat is in the villages, and it is the constant influx from the villages that brings new life and a national feeling to Zagreb. For in its history the city has not been pre-eminently Croat, merely the convenient centre for aristocratic and political feuds and administrations. Therefore to the villages I determined to go.

It is not necessary to go far. Around Belgrade the villages have become corrupted by city life; around Zagreb they act as a brake upon it. Just outside the city limits, just beyond the great cemetery of Mirogoj, where the grave of the Croat leader Stjepan Radić has become a national shrine, begin the forest-covered slopes of the Slijeme. It is a god-send to the people of Zagreb. On Sundays and feast-days its immense area is filled with little groups of young people, happy and healthy, usually singing Croat songs to a harmonica or guitar. For one reason why Zagreb has so great a musical tradition is that the people themselves are really musical. Nearly all the Croat composers use national themes as a basis for their work; so for that matter do the Serbs, more rarely the Slovenes, who are intellectuals and modernists. Haydn, too, used Croat melodies continually in his works, and appears to have been of Croat origin.

From the heights one may see clearly the former division into two cities, which caused such trouble in the history of Zagreb and hindered its development. In the City Museum are old prints showing them completely divided. One can see also the new quarters of the city, which have developed surprisingly in recent years, and are laid out with good taste and a sense of plan. Also the Maximir Park with its attractive zoo, and the buildings of the former semi-autonomous Croatian administration; and, in the background, the silver line of the Sava and the rich valley lands from which the city draws its wealth.

From the summit, however, there is quite another

view. From the terrace of the comfortable Tomislav Dom, recently built by the Croatian Mountaineering Society, one can look north over the Croatian Zagorje, a region of low forest-covered mountains, with charming villages, each with its tiny white steeple. That is the real Croatia, a country of hard-bitten, hard-drinking peasants. A popular song begins:

Never yet was Zagorec  
Who ever sold his wine;  
But in merry company  
Drank it to the dregs.

And very good wine it is, as we found at the mountain hostel.

Most of the villagers of the Zagorje have preserved their national costumes, as have also even the villages on the outskirts of Zagreb itself. The peasants are proud of it, and rightly so. Even the ubiquitous Bata has had less influence here than elsewhere. To them it is a symbol of their country and their people, and they are proud of both. Even the children wear it in miniature edition. One must deeply respect a people that so preserves its tradition, and is too sensible to be laughed out of it by first generation town dwellers.

We went down, then, to the village of Gračani, where there was a festival in honour of St. Florijan. Not that there are any firemen here, but he has also other duties. Before the church large marquees had been erected, and little booths where young lovers could buy gaily-decorated hearts for their beloved.

All the peasants were in national costume. The only city-dressed people were a few visitors like us. Every one was very friendly, and we sat on long wood benches, listening to the peasant band, drinking a sugary wine made especially for festivals, and eating honey-cakes.

Meanwhile the sky had been getting more and more overclouded. On the heights of the Slijeme, it has been

even cold. Now a swirl of mist, circling down the valley, showed that up there it was raining. There was a flurry of booths trying to get under cover in time. Before we could get to our car, the rain was coming down in streams and torrents, weighing down the canvas of the marquees. The ground beneath our feet turned in a few moments to a rich sea of mud. Every one stood on the benches and tables, and one young man started a song. Even if the festival were spoilt, we would still be merry. A fire or two on which lambs had been roasting for supper were extinguished in a few moments.

St. Florijan was doing his stuff.

## XVIII

### SLOVENIA

**S**LOVENIA is quite distinct from the rest of Yugoslavia. Landscape, temperament, history, tradition, and language: all are different. The common bond is race. Sceptics might add 'the ties of common funk'.

The landscape is Alpine. Slovenia is the eastern continuation of the Alpine system of Switzerland and the Tyrol. At first glance one might be in either of those two countries. Only a closer inspection reveals that almost all the older churches, whose towers are so typical of the countryside, are or have been fortified against Turkish raids. Also the Slavonic language of all the signs. But the high snow-covered peaks, the wooden chalet-like houses, the flower-spattered upland pastures, the little sawmills, and the rich flocks are familiar. Only here the rivers run towards the east, uniting at last to form the mighty Sava, the main road to Belgrade and the east.

The Slovene temperament is Slav, but with a great deal of the order and method of the German. They are the best subordinates of Yugoslavia. They are a serious people, with a greater percentage of books published per head than any other people. They have a great, though recent, literary tradition, which has produced great writers like Prešern and Cankar, and almost every Slovene knows German, and a large number Italian as well. With their comrades under Italian rule and those in America, they number approximately three million. In Yugoslavia itself, there were at the last census (1931) about one million two hundred thousand of them.

The Slovene language is comprehensible to the Serb or Croat, but has marked differences. It is far more archaic and complicated, and, incidentally, far more

difficult to learn. After Serbian, it sounds curiously explosive, but the great Slovene poets have tuned it to melodious and pleasing rhythms. As in all mountain districts, there are very many sub-dialects, of which the literary language is a more or less artificial adaptation.

Slovene history is a puzzle for the Englishman, who finds it hard to understand a struggle for liberty lasting over a thousand years in which scarcely a single incident of historical importance occurs. In fact, the most wonderful thing about the Slovenes is that they exist at all as a nation, after so many centuries of foreign rule.

The Slovenes settled in their present homes in the early sixth century, replacing the Celto-Roman inhabitants of earlier times, partly as independent tribes under their princes, partly as tributaries of the Avars. After that people was annihilated by the Franks, they became a frontier march of the Empire, under Charlemagne. A frontier march they remained throughout most of their history, under various Markgraves, now defending the Empire against the Hungarians, now other Slavs, later against the Turks. Throughout the whole of feudal times, they only make three important appearances on the stage of history, a brief period of glory under the powerful Counts of Celje, a brilliant revival of national feeling and language during the Reformation under Primož Trubar, and a participation in the peasants' revolts. Later, under the Dual Monarchy, they came directly under Austrian rule, and their powerful nobles merely a German ruling caste. During this time the few towns were almost completely germanized; Slovene was scarcely spoken, and Austrian art and architecture triumphed everywhere. Its influence is still very marked today. But, as with all Slav races, the real strength of the people lay in the peasants who remained uncompromisingly Slav, and developed in their own way in their distant mountain valleys. Goldsmith's 'rude Carinthian boor' probably thought he was shutting the door on a German.

The formation of the Illyrian province of Napoleon re-awoke dormant national feeling. Ljubljana became the administrative centre, and Slovene was admitted to equality with French and German. This was the first period of revived Slovene literature, and the Slovene poets celebrated Napoleon as a deliverer.

When the Slovenes fell once again under Austrian rule, national feeling was already awake and active. The Slovene people produced great writers and philologists, who stressed the Slav origin of their people. It was Kopitar who encouraged and assisted Vuk Stefan Karadžić, the founder of modern Serbo-Croat language and literature. The Slovene Church, too, took a hand, helping the people and encouraging the feeling of nationality. Bishop Slomšek, one of the stoutest nationalists, is almost a saint to the Slovenes.

In 1870 the Croats and Slovenes made a common statement of their Yugoslav aims. Attempts to germanize the country became less and less successful. After the war they followed their leader, Antun Korošec, now Yugoslav Minister of the Interior, and voted for union with the Croats and Serbs.

This long struggle was none the less bitter for being largely without major incident. It has left the Slovene with a sincere admiration for the German, but with an equally sincere distrust of his methods and intentions. The same applies only a little less to the Italian, who always coveted, and now holds, the western districts of Slovenia, and Istria. Their culture is always overshadowed by Germany, but their sympathies, when not purely clerical, for they are devoted, almost bigoted, Catholics, turn towards France and England, who have, and can have, no territorial ambitions at their expense.

Once across the borders of the Drava Province, as Slovenia is now officially called, the river Sava changes character. From a broad and dignified waterway, it becomes a fast-rushing mountain river. You can find

trout here; in the muddy waters of the lower reaches they would stifle.

At Zidani Most the train turns into the valley of the Savina, past Celje, for Maribor. There I was received with a hospitality rare even in Yugoslavia. In the comfortable hotel bedroom I felt pleased and happy. There was no doubt about Maribor. I liked it. Next morning I spent many minutes watching athletic cats scrambling about the pointed roofs of the castle before going down to breakfast.

When I was last in Maribor, the great hall of the castle was a cinema. It would have been curious to see Charlie Chaplin or Wallace Beery in that riot of Baroque extravagance, but I remember that by chance I happened on Bergner in *Catherine II*, which was not inappropriate. Now, thanks to the effort of the local lovers of art, the castle has been purged of its intruders, various recent accretions removed, and the whole building restored to something like its previous beauty. Especially the cloister-like galleries have been cleared. They were probably the work of Domenico de Lallo, who restored the castle in 1544, after it had been badly damaged in a Turkish raid. Those galleries are beautiful, but look a little strange in Maribor. They are more reminiscent of the south than of the home of winter sports.

The castle is a mixture of styles, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque, but age has weathered them into a unity. Now that the rubbish of the last 150 years is being cleared away, the castle will again be able to represent the Mark-burg, as it has done for centuries. Save that now it is a western March, and the barbarians come from another side.

Generally speaking, the Baroque has spread unchecked over Slovenia. I myself cannot get to like its tawdry tinsel, despite one or two fine examples that I have to admire in spite of myself. But sometimes the older and more native Gothic can still be found, and when it is

found it is beautiful. Modern Slovene taste inclines among the intellectuals to modernism, and among the peasants to the traditional and by now familiar Baroque. An example of this at its best—or worst, according to taste—is the column erected in the Main Square in 1681 to commemorate the cessation of the terrible plague that followed the Thirty Years War. The statue was added later, in 1743. In the Maribor Museum are some lovely wood statues of the Gothic period and a glass-painting apparently by Dürer.

It is not, however, in the naïve style of the peasant glass-painting, which is unfortunately dying out. These pictures, actually on glass, painted by a lasting process which has survived the centuries, are not great works of art, but they are extremely charming by reason of their gay colours and deep religious sense. They are dying out for a very practical reason; they were originally so painted that the holy figures might survive the smoky winters in the little Alpine huts. In other words, that the Holy Saints might be periodically washed. Now that housing has improved, their reason for existence is gone.

Incidentally, I should like to make a protest against distinguished authors making broad statements about local art with insufficient knowledge. I have just read a book on Rumania, where a very distinguished author indeed states that this art is peculiar to Transylvania. It is not. It is found in Slovenia, and, I believe, in Bavaria also. He goes on to say that good caviare is prepared outside Russia only at Valcov in the Danube Delta. First-class caviare is prepared at Kladovo, where I lived a month and ate it almost every day. He also makes some astonishingly sweeping statements about the Byzantine traditions of fresco-painting, having apparently never heard of the Serbian school of Dečani, Studenica, Staro Nagoričane, Manasija, and a hundred and one other places, or the work of the Serbian painters and architects in Rumania. I should have thought that the



Slav inscriptions in places where the Russians never came until fresco-painting was long dead, would have been enough to remind him. Also those eighteenth-century portraits of Turkish beauties by European artists may still be found in the Herberstein castle, where they came through the connection of that family with the still more famous Zrinjskis. However, to be fair, until I read his book I myself thought those to be unique.

An art, however, which does seem peculiar to Slovenia—I speak with reserve, being afraid of being caught in my own trap!—is the beautifully painted bee-hive boards, decorated with scriptural scenes and figures of saints, and, more rarely, secular heroes. A group of twenty or thirty of these box-like hives, each with its gaily painted panel, is a lovely sight, which may still be seen, although the modern Slovene peasant mostly uses plain washes of colour. The best specimens are now in museums.

Yet another thing typical of Slovenia is the 'klapotec' or wind-rattle, used to scare birds from the vineyards. Slovene poets have used it as the symbol of their country.

Maribor is a patriotically Slovene city. When Styria was a political unit, the centre of German culture and tradition was Graz, of Slovene culture and tradition Maribor. It was not then so important as it is now. For its growth and development, it has to thank its position on the main Vienna-Zagreb railway line.

The interest of Maribor is not, however, limited to the city itself, nor was the hospitality of its people. The next afternoon I was taken to see Ptuj. This name, seemingly unpronounceable to English eyes, is derived from the Roman Poetovium. It was an important Celto-Illyrian settlement, which was conquered by the Romans under Augustus, when it became the centre of military operations in Pannonia and the headquarters of the VIIth Legion Augusta, and, later under Claudius, of the XIIIth Legion Gemina. Under the Flavians it became

SLOVENE COSTUME



SOUTH SERBIAN COSTUME



a municipum, and under Trajan a colony, Colonia Ulpia Traiana Poetovio. It was in his palace at Ptuj that the unfortunate Gallus was arrested by Constantius and sent to Pola to be executed in 354. It was also the site of the bloody battle between Theodosius the Great and Maximus and finally had the melancholy honour of being the home-town of the last miserable Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus.

The way to Ptuj lies along the lower Drava Valley. A shrine at which we stopped was built over a Bronze Age grave. Near the roadside—the river has changed its course—was the Roman port of the Classis Flavia Pannonica. Between Maribor and Ptuj are no less than three Mithraea. In more recent times the villages here were colonized from Bosnia, and the people still retain certain peculiarities of customs and dialect.

At Ptuj I again met St. Florijan. His statue, dated 1745, stands in the market-square, a precaution against the many fires which devastated Ptuj in the preceding century. Another statue, of the Virgin, commemorates the deliverance of Ptuj from the Turks in 1664.

There are many traces in Ptuj of the earlier and purer Gothic style, before it became corrupted by the Baroque. The church of the Minorites has some good frescoes of the thirteenth century, and the parish church of the town, built about 1312 on the site of a still older church where Cyril and Methodius heard the Slav mass on their abortive journey to Rome, has also good Gothic work. There are also remains in the museum, which is housed in the thirteenth-century Dominican monastery. In it is still preserved an altar to the god Liber and the goddess Libera, proving that the famous vineyards of Slovenska Gorica had their devotees, then as now.

But the most striking of all the memorials of Ptuj is the medieval column of shame. It is about fifteen feet high and six broad, and is a Roman tombstone. On it the god Orpheus charms with his lute the birds and

beasts, the mourning Aphrodite rifles the dead Adonis, and Orpheus once more tries to charm the gods of the underworld to restore to him the lost Eurydice.

The mayor of the city had accompanied me on my sightseeing, and after, in true Slovene fashion, suggested that we, too, sacrifice to Liber and Libera. He led the way to an old tavern, with a bunch of wood-shavings over the door in place of the customary bush. It is now kept by a fat and smiling Slovene, the best possible advertisement for his own food and wine, but was first founded by one of the few Jews of Slovenia, and is still known as Judennacl. There we ate and drank of the best; Slovene sausages from Kranj and heavy wine from Ljutomer. We sat under the cool vaults, gaily decorated with stencils of a peasant wooing. The proprietor joined us, and also his daughter, who served. The Ljutomer wine is heady, and we grew merry. Liber and Libera received a full oblation.

At last the mayor suggested that we see the church at Črna Breg. It was not far, and we had a car. I said that we had perhaps sacrificed too much to other gods, but he insisted, and I was too somnolent to argue. So we went through vineyards and up a tiny twisted road to the church. It was once fortified, and remnants of the old fortifications still remain. Indeed, the Turks on this foray in 1474 remained here for some time, liking the land, and there are several families in the village with Turkish surnames.

The church was built in the fifteenth century, and is now a mixture of Gothic and Baroque. But what I was intended to see was a marvellous relief of the family of the Counts of Celje, each tiny head a masterpiece of portraiture. The colours are still clear, and the features and dresses clearly recognizable. It is like a procession of the centuries. The parish priest explained whose was each head, and told me of their history, but my head was not yet clear of the Ljutomer, and the whole church

seemed full of former lords and ladies of the house of Celje.

Finally I told the priest as much. But he pooh-poohed the idea.

'Where were you? Judennacl? But that is not wine. Come and taste some of mine.'

Thank goodness this time we left the chauffeur outside, so got back to Maribor in safety.

It may be that the Alpine landscape, with its lonely valleys and snow-capped mountains, exercises a peculiar spell. I know that is true of myself, and I have noticed it often enough in others. When I am in Slovenia I have not the same interest in art, in history, in people, as I have in the other districts of Yugoslavia, and I have many friends in England who would not dream of going to France or Italy or Spain without having at least a superficial background, a literary frame in which to place their impressions, but who return from Switzerland and the Tyrol without the smallest idea of those countries. I could not spend a day in the comparatively uninteresting Voivodina without wanting to know more about it, whereas I have spent months in Slovenia and come back with no more than a general impression of having spent a very pleasant holiday. One spends all the day in the open air, making endless excursions. Nature has so far outstripped man in her creations that the towns and villages of Slovenia seem only a background to her masterpieces; whereas the mountains and ravines of South Serbia, of Dalmatia or of Montenegro seem only the background to the human dramas that have been played out among them. It is the same with the literature of the Alpine lands. The interest is in the landscape; the characters are only too often bloodless puppets.

I have spent several holidays at Bled, for example. But the impression that remains with me is that of a lovely lake among mountains, surrounded by luxurious hotels, and with little gondolas gliding over smooth

water to and from the island church in the centre of the lake. One month, spent in winter before the snow was deep enough for ski-ing, recalls to me a picture of dark reeds, lit by gleams of light from the terrace of the Hotel Toplica, receding into soft velvety darkness, and of being awakened in the morning by the groaning and cracking of the ice forming on the lake, which echoed among the mountains like the grumbling of giants or the distant artillery of some celestial war. Yes, and I must add the picture of the peasant women on home-made skis and skates gliding over the ice to the church in the lake.

Slovenia is the classic land of ski-ing. It is the only country that evolved for itself skis, independent of Scandinavia, and which has a native word for them not borrowed from the north. The Slovene historian Valvasor mentions them in the seventeenth century on the plateau of Bloka, near Ljubljana, describing the peasants as walking on the snow with the aid of planks, and descending the snow-slopes with the speed of devils.

I remember also unforgettable days on the Lake of Bohinj, where the mountains rise so high round that the waters in the early morning and at twilight seem almost black. At the lower end of the lake, near the lovely little Gothic church of St. Janež, is the summer residence of the Yugoslav Prince-Regent Paul, which was made familiar to the British public as the scene of the betrothal of the Duke and Duchess of Kent, who return there frequently. I prefer Bohinj to Bled myself. Bohinj is wilder and more awesome, Bled calm and lovely, but more open and familiar. One might call Bled a beautiful but placid blonde, Bohinj a tempestuous and incalculable brunette.

I remember, too, the serenity and loneliness of the Logar valley, and have spent happy months in the valley that leads from Jesenice on the Austrian (German, if you like) frontier to Rateče on the Italian. For sheer beauty and comfort, it is perhaps the best place for a

summer or winter holiday in Yugoslavia. The mountains here are sheer and precipitous, more imposing than the rounded summits of the Pohorje near Maribor. Mountaineers tell me they are better, and skiers that they are not so good. I cannot judge, as I am only a moderate mountaineer, and have never mastered skis. But the villages are lovely and the mountains superb. There is nothing so restful as to lie in some flower-strewn meadow, high up on the slopes, after a sharp climb, and look down at the peaceful valley below, or up at the snow peaks above. There one can achieve the impossible; namely, to do absolutely nothing, save lie still without thoughts and without desires and let the changing patterns of the clouds or the changing colours of the mountains pass before one's eyes in a passionless content. I have stayed in Kranjska Gora for more than a month, one of the most perfect holidays of my life. But I never even went inside the church, and could not say now what is its period. Sir Humphry Davy, the great scientist, lived for years in this valley, in the little village of Podkoren, and thought it the most beautiful spot in the world. His house is marked with a tablet. A little farther on, at Rateče Planica, is the largest ski-jump in the world, where world records are made.

Slovenia is a comfortable land to wander in. The efficient Slovene Mountaineering Society, S.P.D., has published excellent maps of all the mountains and marked the main paths by little unobtrusive red circles. (By the way, the curious-looking inscription 'Pes pot' means footpath.) They have also built excellent and exceedingly comfortable mountain hostels in the most unlikely places, to aid serious mountaineers. But they do very well also for the dilettante. They have good food, and always excellent company; usually in the evenings they are full of mountaineers making ready for a stiff climb early next morning. One or other of them has always got a harmonica, and everybody sings. The



Slovene songs, too, are typically Alpine. They even yodel. But the Slav tongue gives them a piquancy, and, though not musically very interesting, they are exceedingly gay and tuneful. I remember one of these hostels in particular, built on a wide meadow with a tiny mountain stream through it, directly under the stupendous north wall of the Triglav.

Triglav, meaning the 'three-headed', is the highest peak in Yugoslavia, and has almost a religious significance for the Slovenes. It was the Olympus of the Slavonic Gods, and many legends are associated with it, particularly the lovely story of the Zlatorog, the golden-antlered stag. Rimski-Korsakov has an opera with an early Slav setting that takes place at Triglav.

I did a little mountaineering on this journey also, but I confess it with shame. For I went to the summit by car. There is an excellent motor-road from Maribor to the Pohorjski Dom. This time I was the guest of the local chemist, who was, as all Slovenes, a lover of the mountains and went there whenever possible. His car was a marvel; it must have been at least fifteen years old, and looked it. But it scuttled up the mountain roads like a frightened rabbit. Those who have read Sinclair Lewis's *Free Air* will have a clear picture of our progress.

We started late. By the time we reached the three thousand feet level and the Pohorjski Dom, it was already night. But there was a full moon, and we walked through the lovely and silent pinewoods to the café of St. Bolfenk. This was once a medieval shrine, with a tiny chapel. Now it is a café with a terrace, on the very crest of the Pohorje, overlooking the whole Drava valley. The factories were still working, and there was a line of light from the great power-station at Fala along the silvery line of the Drava to Maribor, and beyond to Ptuj. Behind were only darkling pinewoods. All the excursionists had long gone home, or were hunting supper in one of the two mountain hostels a mile away. There were only

lights and immensity and silence and—for this is Slovenia—excellent wine. The moon was rising, and we were in no hurry to return. We paid the sleepy innkeeper and sat on there, chatting, until late. Finally, after a ghostly journey back through sleeping villages, we returned to Maribor in the early hours of the morning.

I did not trouble to sleep at all that night. For the next morning I had to take leave of my hospitable friends and go onwards. But I had determined to go back by a round-about route, along the Drava and Mislinja valleys, via Slovenjgradec, where I could stop for a few hours between trains.

At a little after five the air was still clear and cold, but an hour later it grew warmer, and the river valley was filled with mist. I could scarcely see the big power-station at Fala, which looked rather like Trollhattan.

It was a curiously international train, which began its journey in German Austria, passed through Yugoslavia, and recrossed the frontier. Also, it was almost empty. I sat alone, dozing and watching the lovely valley of the Drava, where even at that early hour an occasional fisherman was sitting patiently, and the big rafts of logs were setting out on their long journey via Osijek to the Danube and Belgrade. At Dravograd-Meža I changed into the train for Slovenjgradec.

When I arrived, it was still too early to knock up acquaintances, so I strolled out of the town to the old fortress on the hill nearby. There was no one there, but the main gateway was open, and I could pry about inside. It was a typical medieval fortified church, in the Gothic style, evidently little used, for the church was bare and chill, and only in the side-chapel a Baroque altar clashed with the impression of chivalrous austerity. After a few moments, I came out and smoked quietly on a wooden bench opposite a tiny café, also apparently deserted, on whose white wall St. Florijan again appeared, pouring water on a burning house. Probably both church

and café are only open on saints' days. It was getting warm now, and the air was full of scents and the humming of innumerable bees. Thence, past the inevitable Stations of the Cross, back to Slovenjgradec.

It was on this hill that the temple of Roman Colatium stood, but there were no traces left there, though in the city a few inscriptions and columns are preserved. The castle itself dates from about 1000, and the town of Slovenjgradec—as Windischgraetz—is first mentioned in documents between 1090 and 1206 as the site of a mint. In 1453 the cure of the parish was entrusted by the Emperor Frederick III to Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who later became Pope Pius II. Later in the century, Slovenjgradec suffered badly from the inevitable Turkish raids, and in 1489 from the Magyars.

Perhaps its most interesting association, however, is with the famous Austrian family that took its name from the place, Windischgraetz. Their former summer palace still exists, a sprawling building of stucco arcades and many outhouses. It is now a school. Also Hugo Wolf was born here, in an old house on the left of the main street. I was glad to know this. Now I can better appreciate the facile beauty of his songs.

But I had come to see the church. There are, in fact, two. The modern one was built after the Turkish raids, is Baroque and uninteresting. The older one was first deserted and then turned into a storehouse. Recently it was re-opened and cleansed of its rubbish. It was built in 1251 and dedicated to St. Elizabeth. Just before the Turkish raid—in 1450—it was decorated throughout in fresco by the painter Andreas of Otting. Twenty-four years after the church was deserted, with the result that the frescoes have been almost perfectly preserved in all their original freshness. They are perhaps the most wonderful examples of Gothic painting in Slovenia.

The few hours I had before my train left, I spent with a young Slovene in wandering about the fields and

watching the antics of a nestful of young hawks. My companion was learning English by some home-made method of his own. I left Slovenjgradec and Slovenia at last with his heartfelt farewell in my ears:

‘Good-bye, mister. I am afraid to see you again.’

## XIX

### YUGOSLAV SYNTHESIS: BELGRADE

THE little lions of the Kalemegdan fortress at Belgrade are gentle and long-suffering beasts. In winter they wear little caps of snow, and their manes and tails are white and glistening with frost. In summer they lie as if exhausted by the pitiless heat, their heads resting on their plump sheep-dog paws, and their eyes fixed on the distant plain beyond the junction of the great rivers.

Nevertheless, in spite of their air of benevolent and sphinx-like wisdom, they are comparatively recent comers. They have only known the Kalemegdan as a park with spacious promenades built among the ancient bastions and the inner line of defence converted into tennis-courts and outdoor skating-rinks. But possible association with those tremendous and age-old walls has given them precocious knowledge. Cynical and oracular beasts!

The country over which they are gazing changes with the seasons in a cycle of ever-familiar novelty. During the spring floods there is nothing but a sheet of sullen, dirty brown water with limits hinted rather than defined by the drowned tree-tops of the islands and the farther bank. Out of this desolate white-capped mass rise a few fishermen's huts, various navigation marks, and the pathetic and deserted pavilions of the bathing establishments. As the floods subside, leaving behind them a rich coating of silt, the banks and islands begin to assume a definite shape and break into the green of willows, marsh-forest, and tangles of matted briars with an almost ferocious exuberance. Then the colonies of storks return to the Zemun roofs, and forage hungrily along the creeks



years it was the frontier station of the old Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and was separated from Turkish Belgrade not only by the accident of the frontier, but by the more terrible barrier of the plague quarantine. Later, after Serbia became independent, Zemun remained an important trading centre, and its fat and good-natured German burghers became prosperous and powerful. It was then, and was encouraged to remain, a German island in a Slav countryside. Even today the suburb of Franzstal is purely German.

Today most of its exclusiveness has disappeared. For one thing the town is no longer German, and most of the inhabitants are now Yugoslav. But now that it is no longer the frontier, its privileges have disappeared. Indeed, it has even begun to lose its separate identity, and is being merged in the growing city of Belgrade. A few years ago it was declared a part of the Belgrade municipality, and the process is now almost completed by the erection of the new quarter of the Belgrade Fair and the reclamation of the land by the Sava bridge.

For the moment, however, it has retained much of its separate individuality. Its low, sprawling Central European houses, with shady courtyards and small, discreet windows opening on to the street, give it a certain unity, in marked contrast to the vigorous and pushing modernity of Belgrade, which is being rebuilt at an almost incredible speed, and in every conceivable style of the last twenty years.

Life in Zemun is still more spacious and orderly than in Belgrade. It is most noticeable in the smaller details. Here are policemen, dressed familiarly and somewhat surprisingly in old English uniforms which, as a rule, do not fit. In Belgrade they are gendarmes, armed and efficient. Here one still struggles with sleepy and refractory ladies of the telephone exchange, whereas in Belgrade all the 'phones are automatic. There is only one tramline and much less noise.

But probably the most individual thing about Zemun is the storks. There are no storks in Belgrade. They nest on the roofs along the main street, where their wide irregular nests look like a series of enormous flue-brushes projecting from the chimneys, as if the little town were preparing a sort of stupendous spring-clean. Thence they look down on the passers-by, secure in the knowledge that they are considered bringers of good luck, and that no one would dare to harm, or even to insult, a stork. They return, year after year, to the same nests, and the failure of a stork family to reappear perennially is considered a great misfortune. Unhappily it is now more frequent as Zemun gets more and more urbanized. Soon one will have to look farther afield.

They are a graceful and dignified element in the population. Usually one of the pair is out in the marshes hunting frogs, while the other stands on one leg and preens back or breast feathers, occasionally chattering to the next house-top with staccato clatterings of the beak. There is something dignified even about their flight. They fly, as a rule, very high, with slow flappings of their wide ragged wings and their long legs trailing behind them. They land like aeroplanes, wheeling down in slowly narrowing circles.

This regular existence is somewhat accelerated by the importunate demands of the baby storks, but even a large and hungry family would never hustle a stork so much as to lose his dignity altogether.

Approached from the water, there are three outstanding features about Zemun: the railway station, the waterfront, and the Hunyadi tower. The railway station is a relic of greater days. It is a colossal building, which used at one time to house the customs officials of the Dual Monarchy, and shows up from the river like an enormous blot of yellow stucco. Today it is a veritable white (or should one say yellow?) elephant. It seems a pity to tear it down, while its size and position make it



difficult to suggest any use for it. Perhaps it might make a good tram depot!

The water-front is really beautiful. The river bank has been riveted with huge blocks of stone, and along the edge of the embankment a fine double avenue of trees has been planted. It is a charming walk, cool and pleasant even in the most scorching days of summer, yet the inevitable corso still takes place in the main street of the town, even on the most airless days. Still, the object of a corso is not to see, but to be seen.

To my mind it is a detestable habit, only to be explained by the patriarchal regime south of the river, which necessitates the sons and daughters of the better families making respectable acquaintances outside their family circle by some such artificial means. But, once across the Danube, the structure of society is freer and more easy-going, and the necessity of the corso less apparent. However, it has this advantage. The pleasant walks and meeting-places of the town are never overcrowded. The élite are all on the corso.

The actual conduct of a corso is something of a mystery. Every day, for a stated period, roughly from six to eight in the evening, the appointed street is filled with a loitering crowd which fills streets and pavements and paralyses all reasonable movement. The younger people walk up and down in small groups, the married couples parade their domestic happiness, and the elders sit in a kafana or on the pavement at tiny tables and criticize. 'Picking-up' in the English sense of the word is rare, and, when it occurs, is carried out most discreetly. Save perhaps in Belgrade itself, the corso is a most respectable performance. However, even the most sketchy of introductions will serve as an excuse for a chat in passing, and possibly those temporary and precarious contacts serve as occasions for future rendezvous. Compared with a Balkanic corso, Hyde Park seems an orgy of vice!

However, the shady waterfront is almost deserted at

the most pleasant hours of the day, save for the passengers disembarking from the river steamers, or knots of peasants arguing and gesticulating about the octroi station about the duties on tomatoes or melons.

Above the passenger stages are the anchorages of the Danube barges, huge black hulks with their living quarters and navigating bridge perched on the stern, as if in imminent danger of falling off. As a rule the barge-master's family lives on board, and includes, besides several precocious children unclothed in precarious bathing dresses, poultry, dogs, and even an occasional wiry grey pig. The poultry meander up and down their plank bridges on to the bank, where they scratch for luxuries at the edge of the revetment. Yet a sudden scare will send them all scuttling back across their planks, like a child's drawing of the animals entering the Ark. How they distinguish their own plank and barge among so many exactly similar is a mystery.

The dogs require a dissertation to themselves. They are of every conceivable breed, as many as possible being united in a single dog. Yet their nautical life seems to have given them certain general characteristics common to all sailors. They are intensely proud of their own vessel, and will brook no intrusion on her cherished decks without protest; otherwise they are good-tempered, noisy, companionable, and promiscuous in their amours. It would be a good thing for some one searching for novelty to collect three or four of the more remarkable specimens and breed from them a new and composite 'Danube barge-dog', to be awarded a separate class at Crufts. It would certainly be a remarkable animal.

There are various historical monuments to be found in Zemun. But they are not many considering its stormy and turbulent past. Of the prehistoric settlements there remain a few mounds, the uncertain tracings of some huts, and those vague and almost indecipherable scratches and pieces of pottery, out of which pre-historians re-

create the life of long-distant ages. Of Roman Taurunum little more remains; a few stones only. The fury of the Huns destroyed it once and for all. From the Middle Ages there is somewhat more: and most of all from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with their long struggle for position and privilege between German, Slav, and Magyar.

The most impressive of these is the Zemun watch-tower, erected a few years before the war, in the centre of the medieval fortress. It is associated with the memory of Hunyadi Janos, the great Hungarian leader, who, in alliance with the Serbian despot George of Smederevo, passed his life in unceasing struggle with the Turks. It has been the custom of later historians, particularly those of the nineteenth century, to regard the long struggle between the Hungarians and the Turks as a clear-cut contest between Cross and Crescent, and entirely to ignore the part played by the Serbian despots. Nothing is farther from the truth. Christendom was hopelessly divided, and nearly always one or more of the Christian princes of central Europe was in alliance with the Turks. Many of them, forced to choose between Turkish and Hungarian overlordship, chose the former, and the feeling between Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic was at least as bitter as that between Moslem and Christian. Had Christendom ever been united, or even had the principal frontier powers, the Serbs, the Hungarians, and the Venetians, managed to act together, they could undoubtedly have held back the tide of Turkish invasion. But quarrels for precedence among the Serbian nobles, civil wars in Hungary, and the predominantly commercial ideals of the Venetians, all played into Turkish hands. They were at least as capable politicians as they were experienced soldiers.

Domestic intrigue and bad faith were universal. The great figures of the time were those who by force of personal character managed to rise, if only for a few years,

above the petty turmoil of nobles and estates, and to realize the danger of the growing Turkish Empire; such men as the despots Stefan Lazarević and George and the Hungarian leader Hunyadi Janos. Even the alliance of the two latter was overshadowed by personal quarrels.

Incidentally Hunyadi Janos, or Sibirjanin Janko as the Serbian ballads call him, appears to have been of Rumanian origin. The pretender to the Hungarian throne, Hunyadi's irreconcilable enemy Henrich of Celje, once wrote to Despot George to say 'that he should put to death the children of Hunyadi Janos, so as to wipe out for ever those dogs of Vlachs'.

At present the memorial tower is not in very good repair. The staircase to the second gallery is without a handrail and is dangerous. Part of the stone coping has fallen away and been repaired, safely enough, but with little regard to the design of the building as a whole. But one can go up to the first gallery, which encircles the tower. On one side lies Belgrade, the 'White city', which only from here seems worthy of its name, when the setting sun lights up walls and windows and tips its pinnacles with fire. Save to the south over Serbia one looks out over the huge expanse of the plain, and can trace the intricate windings of the creeks in the low marsh lands and the bends of the Danube and the Tamiš.

Below are the battered walls of the old fortress. Their line can be traced easily enough, but the only definite section is the great well. Behind, is the military graveyard, surrounded by a high stone wall, pierced by flanking loopholes, as though waiting for the dead to rise and take up their arms again in defence against some ghostly enemy.

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The fortress of the Kalemegdan is on a high bluff, overlooking the confluence of the two greatest rivers of

Europe, the Danube and the Sava. It has for centuries been regarded as the key to the Balkans, and is a natural centre of communications.

Needless to say, such a site has been inhabited from the very earliest times. In pre-historic days there were settlements here, as also at Zemun and Pančevo, and at Vinča a few miles down the Danube. The relics of these most ancient settlements are now being excavated, and may be seen by the learned or the curious in the Museum of Prince Paul in Belgrade. Probably there was communication between them and the pre-Greek civilizations of the Aegean, but this communication was evidently later broken, as in Neolithic times the Danube cultures are purely Central European.

First the Illyrians held Belgrade. They appear out of the uncertain mists of the earliest ages and dwell there until displaced by the great migration of the Celts, who occupied Belgrade in the fourth century B.C., and lived there more than three hundred years, naming their city Singidunum, by which it was known to the Romans. The little river on which Pančevo stands is still called the Tamiš, the same Celtic root as our own Thames.

Under the Romans, Belgrade was an important trading centre, but it was never of great administrative importance. The great Roman cities were at Sisak (Siscia) and Sremska Mitrovica (Sirmium). The main legionary camp was at Viminacium, now the insignificant village of Kostolac.

In Byzantine times, the city increased in importance and was the seat of an Arian bishop. During the wandering of the nations, it was taken and re-taken many times. The Huns demolished it; Justinian the Great rebuilt it. But it was no longer a cultural centre, but only a precarious outpost of empire.

In the Dark Ages the list of conquerors grows rapidly: Huns, Avars, Kumans, Bulgarians, and many other transient and ephemeral empires won and lost it. The

one important fact in all this welter of nameless history is the coming of the Slavs, who, though not at once occupying Belgrade, colonized the country around it and settled there, where they remain to this day.

In the early Middle Ages Belgrade once more appears upon the scene of definite history. Still a Byzantine frontier city, it was vigorously disputed by the energetic Hungarians, 'a cavalry people with an iron rule', and the growing power of the Serbs. These two peoples, in fact, disputed the possession of Belgrade for over three hundred years.

Under the leadership of the famous dynasty of the Nemanjas, the Serbian people, till then a nation of loosely organized tribes, began to take a leading part in Balkan affairs. Belgrade first became a Serbian city under King Stefan the First—crowned in the twelfth century. Although subject to violent attacks by the Hungarians, it was the capital of Stefan Dragutin Nemanja, and was an important city under Stefan Milutin. But the movement of the Serbian power was south and east, towards Constantinople, and under the great warrior and first Serbian Emperor, Stefan Dušan the Mighty, Belgrade was once again a frontier city which was quickly lost after his death.

This is the time of the Ottoman invasions, which destroyed the Byzantine civilization, then the most advanced in the world, and broke the power of the Balkan states. But the Serbs still maintained a considerable state under their despots, which stretched from the Iron Gates of the Danube to the Adriatic. But their lands were scattered, and not even the genius of their great despot Stefan the Tall, Lazarević, the greatest warrior and one of the greatest poets and statesmen of his time, could save them. For a time his capital was in Belgrade. The Tatar invasion of Turkey gave the Serbs a few years' respite, but when the Turkish army, then the most highly organized and disciplined in the world,

returned to Europe, the fate of Serbia could no longer be in doubt.

Stefan's successor, the despot George Branković, was forced to hand Belgrade over to the Hungarians and built as his capital the fortress of Smederevo, a few miles down the river, whose mighty ruins can still be seen. But Smederevo fell in 1459, and the fate of Belgrade was already certain. It was taken in 1521 by Suleiman the Magnificent after twenty attacks. Shortly after this it became the seat of a pasha and the centre of a Turkish administrative district.

For nearly three hundred years Belgrade became a Turkish city, and even in the Belgrade of today one can still find traces of their rule. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the forces of Christendom, at last awake to the dangers of Turkish invasion by the conquest first of Serbia, then of Hungary, and the repeated attacks on Vienna, lay before the walls of Belgrade and pitted their greatest generals against the Turks. In 1688 it was taken by Maximilian Emanuel of Baden, but was lost again two years later. In 1717 it was again taken by Prince Eugene of Savoy, the greatest general of his age, and was held by Austria until 1739.

We have an account of Belgrade under the Turks, written by the traveller Čelebija. He speaks of the fortress as a 'precious stone, full of wonders'. It had a double line of fortifications, and one hundred and sixteen towers of defence. The lower part of the fortress was so arranged that from its walls not even the most powerful archer could shoot into the inner fort. He speaks also of four great iron gates and of enormous dungeons, more than a hundred feet deep, and able to hold three thousand prisoners.

The Kalemegdan has been destroyed and rebuilt seventeen times. The main outlines that it has today date from this period of strife between the Christian armies and the Turks. Now the old fortifications have been

turned into pleasant walks and alleys, and the Kalemegdan is probably the most beautiful park of Europe. The little church of Ružica also dates from this time, and owes its singular preservation to the fact that the Turks used it as a powder magazine. In the upper park is the tomb or 'tulbe' of Mustafa Pasha, 'Mother of the Serbs,' who was killed here by the indignant janissaries, but popular tradition also associates it with that other Mustafa 'the Black', the Grand Vizier who tried to take Vienna in 1683.

Although wars and treaties freed the Turkish provinces north of the Danube, Belgrade still remained in Turkish hands. The Austrian general, Laudon, took it once more, but only held it for a short time. But his occupation was extremely important, since he used many Serbian auxiliaries in his armies and re-awakened their national consciousness which had previously been expended in the personal service of the Austrian Emperor.

It was only by a national movement that Belgrade could be freed once and for all. This came about by Turkish oppression and misrule. In the first years of the nineteenth century the pashaluk of Belgrade was governed by the pasha Mustafa, an enlightened man who protected the Serbs. But the hereditary caste of the janissaries conspired against him, killed him in the Belgrade Kalemegdan, and organized a rule of force under their leaders the Dahis, defying even the Sultan himself. Fearing the Serbs, they organized a massacre of their leaders, and the people, driven to extremities, took up arms. They chose as their leader Kara or 'Black' George Petrović, a man of undoubted military genius. He welded the Balkan Serbs into a fighting force which, driven on by the powerful impulses of patriotism and despair, was irresistible. Karageorge entered Belgrade in triumph in 1806, and made it his capital.

The European powers then took a hand in the game of Balkan politics, which gradually degenerated into the ignoble and intricate chafferings of the 'Eastern Question',



Serbia being used as a pawn to further the ambitious designs first of Austria and then of Russia. A few years after the revolt of Karageorge, the Turks returned in force, suppressed the revolt, and re-entered Belgrade.

Oppression began again, worse than before. For a time the Serbian people, through their spokesman, Miloš Obrenović, tried to obtain concessions from the Porte, but at last nothing was left save a second rebellion. Belgrade again became Serbian, though the Kalemegden remained in the hands of the Turks. By a hattı-sheriff (irrevocable edict) of the Sultan, read to the people of Belgrade in 1830, the Serbs obtained a sort of qualified independence.

This position could not last. The new Serbia grew daily more powerful, the Turkish Empire more and more disorganized. Finally, a minor quarrel between Serbs and Turks led to the commandant of the fortress ordering a bombardment of the undefended town. The situation now became critical, and the Turks could no longer maintain their position. Belgrade and the seven other fortresses in Turkish hands were 'confided to the care of Prince Michael'. Turkish pride was saved, and the Serbs remained *de facto* masters of their country. On April 6, 1867, Riza Pasha, the last Belgrade Mutasherrif, handed over the keys of the fortress to Prince Michael. Belgrade and Serbia were free!

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Despite its long tale of history, Belgrade is a city with the virtues and the vices of youth. It is energetic and hasty, inconsiderate and careless of consequence. It has moments of rare beauty, tempered by others of the sheerest vulgarity. It has grandiose plans, which are often spoilt by mediocre achievement. So it is always tearing down, to begin anew. It has an enormous tolerance for all that does not get directly in its way; then it has moments of sheer fanaticism. Its people have a lusty

love of wine, women, and song, which is often a crust concealing a spiritual shyness and a tremendous sense of the ideal. It is adolescent and blundering. But at least it is alive!

It is a city of the most violent contrasts, as befits its position as key to West and East. In it are many sensitive and cultured artists, but its public artistic life is contemptible. Socially, it varies from almost harem-like restrictions to an ultra-modern freedom. Amours are everywhere, but there is little or no organized vice. It has almost no night-life in the Western sense of the world—such as it has is merely a bad copy—but in few other cities does one so often sit until dawn with wine and song. It bristles with rumours and intrigues, but no one takes either of them very seriously. There is little grey in the life of Belgrade, but there is a bewildering criss-cross of blacks and whites.

Probably the first thing to strike the visitor is the incredible number of kafanas and 'bife' (buffets). For the Beogradjanin is a gourmet. They cater to every taste and every pocket, but almost all serve the various specialties of the Serbian cuisine. It is worth while knowing something about these. For one thing they are extremely good, and for another they are often, in the interior of the country, the only eating.

To be accurate, there is no such thing as a specifically Serbian cuisine. The same dishes may be found throughout the Balkans, under various names. Many of them are originally either Turkish or Greek. Stuffed paprikas or tomatoes with a sour-milk sauce are always a stand-by; so are the sarmas, cabbage leaves, either fresh or soured, stuffed with rice and minced meat, and served with sour cream or tomato sauce. Stuffed vine-leaves cooked in the same way are even better. Other good dishes are djuveč, a kind of thick rich stew of paprikas, tomatoes, and potatoes with meat or fish, musaka, a Balkan shepherd's pie, usually of aubergines cooked in kajmak, which is

a kind of thin cream-cheese, janija, and many others. There are innumerable varieties of tripe, which are better than they look; especially sirište, which look like chrysanthemums steeped in blood.

But the main supports of all Balkan kafanas are the spit and the grill. In both cases the meat is cooked over charcoal embers, which gives it a very pleasant flavour. Sucking-pigs, looking rather like impaled babies, are excellent for those without imagination. Then there are čevabčići, little skinless sausages of mixed chopped meat, and ražnjići, pieces of meat slowly grilled on tiny skewers and so served, like cats' meat, and countless others too numerous to mention. Take courage then, and try them. Even the most unlikely-looking kafana can produce something good, whereas ambitious attempts to copy French cooking only too often end in culinary disillusion.

There are also countless local cold delicacies. Try pršut, dried meat cut in very thin slices, so that the light shining through them shows a dark red. The best is from pork, and is made at Užice; that from beef is not to be recommended to the beginner. There is good black caviare from Kladovo—authentic sturgeon this—and not so good red caviare from Ohrid, made from trout. Incidentally, a young Danube sterlet cooked on the grill is the most delicious of all fresh-water fish after the trout. In South Serbia and in the higher-class Belgrade restaurants you will also find the lake-trout of Ohrid, a fish which by all geologic rules ought to have been a fossil aeons ago, but whose flesh is so sweet that medieval rulers organized services of couriers to have it on their tables. It is only found in the Lakes of Ohrid and the Siberian Baikal.

The number of wines is legion. Apart from the Dalmatian and Slovene wines, which I have already mentioned, there are good white wines from the Fruška Gora, an excellent riesling, and a sweet sparkling wine Biser (the Pearl), and from Smederevo. Good red wines come

from the Župa and from Negotin. A first-class 'rose' wine is the Smederevo Ružica, made from Hamburger grapes, which has a slight muscatel flavour; dessert wines include the Karlovački Bermet, with a curious taste as of burnt almonds, and the Dalmatian prošek.

Serbian rakijas are also excellent and cheap. They cost a penny a glass, whereas bad imitations of French liqueurs cost four or five times as much. The ordinary šljivovica made from plums is not to everybody's taste, but the double-distilled ljuta (fierce) is good. Rakija may be made from almost anything. The best 'dry' rakijas are from plums, various herbs (travarica), juniper (klekovača), and wine shoots (komovica or lozovača); the best sweet ones from cherries (višnjevača), green walnuts (orahovača), or pears (kruškovača). The best liqueur is the well-known Maraschino, which is made in Dalmatia. Pelenkovac, from wormwood, is detestable, but very good for the tummy.

However, I am not writing a cookery book. I shall have done enough if I encourage others to experiment for themselves. If you do not insist on French or English cooking everywhere, you will never fare badly. If you do, you may, or more probably may not, fare well.

To understand the living tradition of the Serbs and the endurance they have shown under misfortune, it is better to leave Belgrade, which, like all capitals, is a cosmopolitan city, and make an excursion to Oplenac. On the way, one passes the mountain of Avala, the first of the Serbian mountains, an almost perfect cone, forest-covered, which had at one time a Turkish fortress on its summit, to overawe Belgrade. There is the Mausoleum of the Yugoslav Unknown Soldier, a stupendous work by Ivan Meštrović. It displays the majesty of death and the grandeur of the sacrifice made by the peasant soldiers of Yugoslavia. Of all the nations of the Great War, Serbia suffered the most, having at one time lost all her territory, and having nearly a quarter of her people destroyed by

war and disease. The recovery of that territory and the brilliant advance of the Serbian and Allied armies from the Salonica front is perhaps the most epic achievement of the Great War. For the Yugoslav soldiers on the other side, for many of the provinces of Yugoslavia were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the dilemma was perhaps even harder; either to fight against their brothers in blood in a war that could bring them no advantage, or to be shot as cowards and traitors. Many chose the second, harder, alternative. It is sometimes surprising to see on Serbian war memorials the dates 1912-1918, but one must remember that the Austrian ultimatum followed almost directly after the victorious close of the Balkan wars, with only the briefest interval of peace. Many of the finest men of Yugoslavia have, if you include guerilla warfare against the Turks, spent all their younger years in war.

The Meštrović memorial is new, and worthy of the great nation that Yugoslavia has become. But I myself have still a sneaking sympathy for the older memorial erected by the peasants just after the war. It was a simple cairn of stones, brought from all districts of Yugoslavia, topped by a simple stone cross. It had less splendour, but allowed the imagination greater play.

Recently Belgrade has become the diplomatic capital of the Balkans, largely owing to the vigour and ability of Dr. Milan Stojadinović, the present Prime Minister. His foreign policy has been masterly. After the war, Yugoslavia was surrounded by enemies. Scarcely a single one of her frontiers could be relied upon in case of a second struggle, and there were several occasions when such a struggle might have broken out. The old allies of the Great War, France and England, were much loved, but far away. Italy, so far from being friendly, occupied much of Dalmatia till 1923. Germany (Austria), Hungary, and Bulgaria were licking their war wounds in resentment. A first attempt was made to better this situation

by a combination of Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia into the Little Entente, a name which was originally given in ridicule, but which has been adopted in honour. It commenced by a series of bi-lateral treaties against a possible attack by Hungary. The other frontiers were still uncertain.

The present situation is as near perfect as the stormy diplomacy of post-war Europe will allow. The loose alliances of the Little Entente have become a confederate unit, working in harmony and co-operation. The continual rumours of its dissolution have been proved wrong by many years of co-operation, economic as well as political. At the time of writing it is even weathering the German-Czechoslovak crisis. The late King Alexander, who made the first moves in the policy of Balkan unity, wished to follow this by a similar confederation of the Balkan states. This was achieved by the Balkan Pact, of Yugoslavia, Rumania, Greece, and Turkey, with disgruntled Bulgaria and dependent Albania dissenting. This pact has now also become a close economic and political unit, and the recent Pact of Friendship between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and the still more recent Salonica Pact, prove that Bulgaria also is now *de facto*, if not *de jure*, a part of Balkan unity. Peace on the Adriatic has been achieved by an agreement with Italy, which means also improved relations with Albania. No pact has been made with greater Germany, but economic relations are close, and friendship seems sincere.

These pacts are of varying popularity with the people, who still look mainly to France and England. But there is no doubt that they are practical politics and sound statesmanship. To set up to be a political prophet is to prove oneself a fool. But one can say that the situation at the moment is better than Yugoslavia (or pre-war Serbia) has ever previously known.

Foreign statesmen and delegations come regularly and frequently to Belgrade, and practically all of them lay a

wreath on the Avala memorial, and then go on to Oplenac to pay homage there to the makers of Yugoslavia, the Kings Peter I, known as the Liberator, and Alexander I, known as the Unifier. Both shrines are perennially gay with flowers.

The way to Oplenac lies through the smiling Šumadija. The name means Country of Forests, but man has long ago conquered the forests, and to-day it is rich downland and fertile fields. It is the heart of Serbia, the centre of the insurrections against the Turks, and took the place of South Serbia as the traditional centre of Serbdom, when the latter was conquered by the Turks in an enslavement that lasted until 1912. The Turks in the Šumadija lived mostly in a few towns and fortresses. The peasants remained in the village *zadrugas*, or family organizations, more or less untouched save for the visits of tax-collectors. Under Turkish rule they became backward and ignorant in the Western sense; literature, art, and education practically did not exist. But national tradition lived fiercely, upheld by the Church, sustained by the national customs, and given colour and life by the marvellous oral literature of the heroic ballads. When the time came for revolt, the peasants of the Šumadija knew for what they were rebelling.

All the Serbian rulers and nobles of the Middle Ages built *zadužbine*, or church bequests, for the good of their souls, and out of natural piety. It is due to this custom that the wonderful medieval art and architecture of the Serbs still survives. This custom was perpetuated, or revived, by the Karageorge family. The church at Oplenac is a *zadužbina* of King Peter.

He chose Oplenac as his site because of its close association with the first Serbian insurrection, which was led by his ancestor Black George Petrović, founder of the dynasty. It was at the village of Orašac, near Topola, where the Serbian leaders, driven to extremes by the oppression of the Turks, met secretly and determined at

least to die fighting. It was at Topola itself that the standard of revolt was raised and Karageorge chosen as their leader. Topola is the nearest village to the hill of Oplenac, on which the church stands.

Karageorge had lived on and off at Topola for twenty years before the insurrection as a pig-breeder, pigs being then, as now, one of the principal sources of wealth of the Serbian village. He had also served under the Austrians, where he learnt something of the military technique of that time, knowledge which served him in good stead in later years. After the insurrection he made Topola his centre, building there a 'konak' or country house, and a small fortress. They were destroyed by the Turks in 1813.

The late King Alexander, however, rebuilt the konak of Karageorge in the original style, the one surviving tower of the fortress is to be a museum of the insurrection, and the church of Karageorge, which was rebuilt by Princess Ljubica, wife of Miloš the Great, still exists. So that there is much left in Topola to remind one of its greatest son.

The career of Karageorge, begun in glory, ended in tragedy. Forced to leave the country, he took no part in the second insurrection under Prince Miloš Obrenović, who obtained a measure of self-government, partly by arms, partly by skilful diplomacy. Karageorge, meanwhile, was in touch with the Hetairia, which dreamed of a Balkan federation of free states, and returned to Serbia, determined to try and win complete freedom by force of arms. He landed at Smederevo and made his presence known there to the voevod Vuličević, who advised Miloš. Miloš felt that Karageorge's plan was precipitate, and would endanger both the newly-acquired position of the Serbs and his own personal position. Karageorge was killed secretly in his tent, and his head sent to the Pasha of Belgrade, who sent it to the Sultan Mahmud II.

It is difficult to blame Miloš altogether for his action.



Turkey was again strong, and it was time for diplomacy rather than open conflict. So far, his action was that of a statesman. But it is certain that Miloš was actuated by personal motives and love of a power which he would not divide with another, especially another so powerful and so beloved as Karageorge. But the worst result of his action was to commence a terrible dynastic feud between the Karageorgević and Obrenović families, which darkened the whole political history of Serbia in the nineteenth century, until it was finally wiped out in blood in 1903.

But Karageorge's great deeds were not forgotten by his people. Two years after his death his body was taken to the church at Topola by order of the Princess Ljubica, and his tomb rapidly became a place of pilgrimage. It remained there until September 8, 1930, when it was reburied in the magnificent *zadužbina* of King Peter I.

The great church at Oplenac is, therefore, not old. The exterior was more or less finished in 1912. But it is in the ancient tradition of Serbo-Byzantine architecture, and worthy of its great medieval originals. True, the architect, K. Jovanović, broke from the strict canon by arranging the cupolas of the church in a cross instead of diagonally, but the Serbian canon was always freer than the pure Byzantine, and the churches of each century of the great period of Serbian architecture, lasting roughly from the middle of the twelfth century to the middle of the fifteenth, are distinguished by a marked originality of form and a great progress of architectural technique and interest. At all events, his daring has been justified, as the whole effect of the building is magnificent.

It is especially beautiful in winter, when the country is covered in snow; the trees form lovely frosted traceries around the white marble church, and the bright colours of the frescoes show even more brilliantly in the hard white snow-glare.

Another departure, but a justifiable one, is the use of

mosaic. The medieval Serbian monasteries are painted, though the earlier painting makes use of a gold ground in imitation of the mosaic technique.

The church was considerably damaged during the Great War, but in 1922 the late King Alexander I, the son of King Peter, undertook its renovation and added the mosaics, designed after the most beautiful frescoes of the monasteries of South Serbia. Oplenac, with the Stockholm Town Hall's Golden Room, is probably the most beautiful example of modern mosaic work in the world.

The old conventions have been followed freely, but on the whole faithfully. On the outside of the church, under the arms of the Karageorgević family in white marble, is a fresco of the patron of the church, St. George, while within are a fine series of frescoes depicting the principal incidents of his life, or at least of his hagiography, for this scoundrel bishop has, both in Yugoslavia and in England, usurped a place of honour to which his actual achievements do not justify him. The central part of the church is devoted to the lives and works of the Serbian medieval saints and rulers. In particular, a series of twenty-four mosaics portray the life and work of St. Sava, the first Serbian archbishop, and the most famous churchman of the Serbian people. His historical career is, on the other hand, worthy of all honour. All the rulers of Serbia are here also, from the Grand Župan Nemanja, the founder of the greatest Serbian dynasty, to the Emperor Dušan the Mighty and the Despot George Branković, the last independent Serbian ruler till the liberation from the Turks. Following medieval custom, King Peter is also depicted near the doorway, holding the model of the *zadužbina*, as 'ktitor' or donor.

The church is marble throughout. The altars, the columns, and the choir stalls are of white marble, there is a band of green marble six feet broad around the church, and the floor is also marble in various shades of grey and yellow. Its austerity is tempered by the brilliance

of the mosaics, which are said to be made up of more than fifteen thousand shades.

Beneath the tattered and bullet-torn standards of the Serbian regiments, which now hang peacefully from the great marble pillars of the central cupola, lie two tombs of plain white marble, the inscriptions on them short and simple. On the right is that of Karageorge, inscribed with his name and the dates 1762-1817. On the left, that of King Peter I, 1844-1921. Above each tomb a lamp is continually burning.

There is no artificial lighting in the great church, only the giant candelabra and the shimmering altar-lamps.

Under the main body of the church is the crypt, which is also the mausoleum of the Karageorgević family. Here lies the body of the late King Alexander I the Unifier. Ever since the assassination at Marseilles, this tomb has been a centre of pilgrimage for the Yugoslav people, and hundreds of thousands of peasants have come from all parts of the country to pray at the tomb of their late leader.

I was in Belgrade when the body was brought home. All the way from Split the railway line had been thronged with weeping peasants, waiting to see their king pass by on his last journey. There were nearly half a million mourners in Belgrade, more than the whole population of the town. The whole atmosphere was tense and expectant. We talked, despite ourselves, in hushed whispers. When at last the coffin appeared in the great square before the railway station, where the people had been waiting since earliest dawn, there was a sort of moan that passed over all that vast concourse of people, like a slough of wind over reeds, right up into the Terazije and the centre of the city.

He was a great man, and his whole people mourned for him.

## XX

### THE HOME OF CAUSES WON: SOUTH SERBIA

I COULD not help comparing Oplenac with the monastery where I found myself a week or so later. This was Markov Monastir, founded in the early fourteenth century by King Vukašin and his son Marko, who became the legendary hero of the Serbs, Marko Kraljević.

Legend has worked a strange transformation in Marko. In actual fact, he was one of the petty princes who carved out a kingdom for himself after the break-up of the Serbian Empire of Dušan the Mighty. His capital was at Markovgrad, that huge mass of volcanic rock a mile or so outside Prilep. There is still the lovely monastery of the Holy Archangel, perched high up on the mountain-side, and a number of ruined courts and churches on the plain below. From its spacious balcony one can look out over the rich Pelargonian plain to Bitolj and the heights of Perister. On the doorway of the monastery church can still be seen contemporary portraits of Marko and Vukašin, grave bearded warriors with the eyes of dreaming eagles.

In history, Marko was a vassal of the Turks, and died fighting in the Turkish ranks as an ally. Legend tells how he prayed, none the less, that the Christians might conquer, though he himself be the first to fall. But it appears that he fought honourably for his overlord. However, the marvellous cycle of the heroic ballads associated with his name have given him a different character. In them he appears more than life-size, a hero sans peur and sans reproche, at least according to the ideas of his age. With his huge studded mace and bear-skin cap, mounted on his wonder-horse Šarac,

who drinks the red wine with him—'half he drank and half to Šarac gave'—he is a figure of fear to the evildoer, which later ages identified with the Turk. He is not afraid to face the Sultan himself, and he ploughs the highways to prevent the Turkish soldiers and merchants from passing.

In the course of ages he became the hero of the Serbs, a far clearer figure to the peasants than their great kings, or even the Emperor Dušan himself. He is befriended by the višas of the mountains, and the greatest champions of Islam cannot stand against him. He gradually assumes more and more the character of a hajduk, one of those fierce outlaws, half brigand and half patriot, who kept alive the spirit of rebellion under Turkish rule. He meets and conquers heroes who lived in history centuries after his death. He is rough and passionate and cruel, but he has always a sense of his duty and honour to Serbia and the Holy Cross. He is an embodiment of the fierce spirit of patriotic revolt, even as the Holy Tsar Lazar is the embodiment of a mysticism based on hope. His deeds and his songs have filled the centuries and fill them still.

Yes, such is the Marko of legend. These songs, which have immortalized him, are the greatest heritage of the Yugoslav race. Originating in South Serbia, they are sung through all the Yugoslav lands, even in Bulgaria. The cycles of Marko Kraljević, violent and passionate, were perhaps the favourites of the Middle Ages. Today, they seem farther away from us than the lovely cycle of Kosovo, where the Tsar Lazar chooses a heavenly before an earthly crown, where the nine brothers Jugovići go to their death at Kosovo to be bewailed in verse as moving as any written by their noble mother, where Miloš Obilić, smarting under the suspicion of treachery, kills the Turkish Sultan in his tent, and where the Maiden of Kosovo comes after the fight to weep over the slain. These are the stuff of history; but still more are they the

stuff of tradition. And tradition, though it may distort the story of the past, has power to create the story of the future. When the Serb soldiers freed the field of Kosovo in 1912, they knelt and kissed the earth that to them was holy, and whose carpet of blood-red paeonies sprang from the blood of the heroes who died there more than five hundred years before.

These are not the only cycles of the heroic ballads, though they are the best. Others tell of the exploits of the hajduks; others, changing the scene, speak of the Uskoks and Ivo of Senj. Yet others record in verse the oppression of the Dahis and the insurrection and victories of Karageorge. One or two of the most lovely are unconnected with any cycle and are pure legend, such as 'The Building of Skadar' and 'Simeon the Foundling'. Their origin goes back to the far pre-Christian past. Yet, even so, they are connected with the names of historical personages. The Serbian bard could hardly envisage a poetry unconnected with the national tradition.

A lesser known cycle deals with the life of St. Sava, and thus connects us directly with the Serbian monasteries, the second great creation of the medieval Serbian soul. Sava was the youngest son of the Grand Župan Nemanja, the founder of the greatest Serbian dynasty. His secular name was Rastko. But, even as a young man, the life of courts did not attract him. When only seventeen, he fled from court with some wandering monks of the Holy Mountain, and when the hue and cry finally found him he had already shaved his head and taken the monastic vows, as the monk Sava. All that the pursuers could bring back to his father was the golden locks that he had cut off and discarded for ever.

For twenty years he resided on the Holy Mountains, where he soon acquired a reputation not only for piety, but for reliability and capable devotion to the interest of the Church. He was soon entrusted with important ecclesiastical duties and negotiations between the monks

of Athos and the Patriarchs of Constantinople. These studies schooled him in statecraft which was to prove of inestimable value in later years.

But Sava was not only a monk; he was also a Nemanja. He saw clearly that a Serbian national state could only be built up on a Serbian national church. He saw the decadence of Byzantine life and its influence on his young and impressionable people. Yet he respected the civilization of the Greeks and wished the Serbs to get the best from it.

In 1197 his father abdicated and came also to the Holy Mountain, as the monk Simeon. There he built the magnificent monastery of Hilendar, which was for ages the centre of Serbian monastic life. There it was that Sava wrote the life of his father, Stefan Nemanja, in a beautiful clear style that entitles him to be called the first great Serbian writer.

In 1204 his father died, and, his restraining influence gone, violent quarrels broke out in Serbia over the succession. Sava left Mt. Athos and returned to his country. Now his training in statecraft served him well. Hungary and Byzantium, both fishing in troubled waters, took different sides in the quarrel. It seemed as if the Serbian state was to fall to pieces a few years after it had been founded. Sava composed the quarrels and ensured the succession.

But in the meantime his opportunity had come, and from a different source. In 1204 the Latins had taken Constantinople, and the Greek Patriarch was forced to flee to Nicaea. The Serbian Church was therefore cut off from the seat of authority, and was compelled to rely upon the Archbishop of Ohrid, then the subject of a foreign power. Sava, therefore, went to Nicaea and, urging the danger of Latin Church influence in Serbia and the value of the Serbs as an ally against the Latin Emperor of Constantinople, counselled the creation of an autonomous Serbian Orthodox Church. His request was

granted by the Patriarch, and Sava himself became first Archbishop of the autonomous Serbian Church.

He fixed his centre at the Monastery of Žiča, whose blood-red towers still stand magnificently in the wooded valley near Kraljevo. There he controlled the destinies of the Serbian Church until 1233, when he resigned the power to his pupil Arsenius and set out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. But meanwhile he had carried out far-reaching and permanent reforms, and closely associated the work of the Church with that of the nation and the dynasty. It may truly be said that the medieval Serbian state was created materially by the Nemanja dynasty, and spiritually by Sava and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

To the end of his life Sava remained a worker. His many voyages always combined piety and statecraft. The last of them was in connection with the autonomy of the Bulgarian Church, and it was at Trnovo, the holy city of the Bulgarians, that he died, as the guest of the Bulgarian Tsar Asen, on January 12, 1235, in the sixty-first year of his age. The Bulgarians also loved and esteemed the life and work of St. Sava, and it was only under protest that they allowed King Vladimir to take his body from the great Rila monastery to that of Mileševo, where it remained until Sinan Pasha had it exhumed and burnt on the hill of Vračar in Belgrade in 1595.

All creeds venerated Sava, and still venerate him. The Catholic King of Bosnia was crowned on his tomb at Mileševo, and the Catholic sculptor Ivan Meštrović has included him among the four great Slavonic saints. He has continued to live, too, in the hearts of the people as well as of the priests. Many are the peasant tales, some rather naïve, of his wanderings and miracles. He was, perhaps, the greatest of the Nemanjas.

I spent several days wandering about South Serbia before I got to Markov Monastir. Of all districts of Yugoslavia, I like it perhaps the best. But I cannot,



though I would like, give it the space it deserves. To describe South Serbia would need another book instead of a few short pages.

I went first to Peć. But I did not use the new railway line, for I wanted to see Prizren once more, and there is no line to Prizren. Therefore I took a bus from Uroševac.

Travelling by bus in South Serbia is always an event. But this journey began in perfect order, save for the inevitable quarrels about seats, for the chauffeur, a burly fellow with dancing-girls tattooed all over his arms, insisted on apportioning the seats according to his own ideas. I fought like the rest and got a good place.

We travelled to Prizren like good tourists, through bare hills, newly-planted oak forest, and with the snow-capped peaks of the Šara always in view. It was at Prizren that the fun began.

Prizren has not changed much in the last five years. It was still the picturesque ramshackle Oriental town that I remembered, with the clear stream of the Bistrica running through it. It was once the capital of Dušan the Mighty, and a little way upstream from the city are the ruins of his fortress and his magnificent monastery, now, alas, only a few courses of carved marble. The great stone porch of the Mosque of Sinan Pasha, he who burned the relics of St. Sava, has fallen down. Otherwise there is little change.

O yes! I had forgotten. There is a new hotel. When I was there last, there was only a tiny gostionica. I had arrived after a long and tiring ride, and did not like the look of it. Therefore I sought a private room, and knocked at the door of a lovely old Turkish house. Had they a room? They had, and I was shown into a spacious and beautifully proportioned chamber with an exquisite ceiling of carved woodwork.

'This,' I thought, 'is perfect,' but nevertheless had doubts. The house was old and built of wood. It would be better to ask. Diffidently, I inquired:

'Have you any bugs here?'

My hostess was most offended.

'Bugs! Of course there are bugs! Do you take this for a stable?'

So, in the end, I went back to the *gostionica* and spent a peaceful night.

Prizren is still somewhat primitive. It is near the frontier and cut off from Skoplje by the Šar mountains. Also there is no railway. Therefore the officials stationed there do not like it. Our chauffeur remarked bitterly:

'There is nothing here. No bathing, no sport, no cinemas. It is a place of exile. If ever a mother loses her son, she can be sure to find him in the south.'

I cannot quite agree with him. There is beauty, there is plenty, and one of the best markets in South Serbia. But then I haven't got to live in Prizren.

As there is no railway, the bus service is the main means of communication, and the majority of the passengers got out at Prizren. When I got back to the bus, to continue my journey to Peć, there were only five of us, all men. Therefore we were transferred to an older and smaller bus, which must have dated from the occupation, and looked as if it had been under fire.

The driver turned to me, as the only 'gospodin' in the bus, and said timidly:

'Are you in a great hurry to get to Peć?'

I said no; an hour or so was of no great importance to me.

'Do you mind, then, if we stop and bathe. I will hurry up as much as I can, so that we will have time.'

He did. I am surprised that we reached the outskirts of Prizren with any teeth left, after that jolting over old and uneven Turkish cobbles. On the main road it was only a little better, as the inevitable repairs were in progress.

A little outside the town we picked up a gendarme. The driver's face fell. His bathe seemed out of the

question now. But I, too, was hot and sticky, and thought it was up to me, as a 'gospodin,' to take a hand. So I said boldly:

'We are going to stop and bathe. Will you join us?'

He was only too glad, having just walked some ten kilometres from a distant village. So at a bridge over the Drim, where that miserable stream has a somewhat deeper pool, we parked the bus on the roadside and all turned out to bathe in the clear cold water. It did us good. We were all, including the gendarme, singing lustily when we arrived at Djakovica.

Djakovica is a town of white dust and darkly veiled women, Albanian Moslems mostly. But there are some fine houses in the Oriental style. Thence we drove on towards Dečani.

High Dečani is one of the most lovely of all the monasteries, and one of the most interesting. For the chief architect was a Franciscan friar from Kotor, a certain Vid, who added romance details to the Serbo-Byzantine style. Had time permitted a completely Yugoslav style might have eventuated. It lies in a fold of the barren mountains, just off the fertile valley of the Metohija, in a forest of flowering chestnuts, and watered by one of the many streams with the name of Bistrica. It was commenced in 1327 by Stefan Uroš III, who is usually known as Dečanski, and completed by his son, Dušan the Mighty, in 1335, who also added the frescoes thirteen years later.

The fact that it was built by a Catholic is a striking tribute to the religious tolerance and national unity of those days. Some of its unique beauty is perhaps due to this Western influence, but much is also due to its material, courses of red, steel-blue, and grey marble which have toned into a wonderful mellowness. Doors and windows are richly carved with intricate designs of birds, beasts, and plants. The interior is frescoed throughout. There are more than a thousand of them, covering every detail

of the church, even the pillars, whence various Stylite saints look down on one. A whole wall is decorated with the family tree of the Nemanjas, where every face has life and character. It is one of the most beautiful of all the Serbian monasteries, less austere but more human, a fairyland of colour where every picture is connected either with Holy Writ or with the Serbian past.

There are more than a thousand Orthodox monasteries in the wide expanse between the Fruška Gora and the Adriatic and Ægean seas, and although very many were irretrievably damaged during the long centuries of Ottoman domination, there are still a sufficient number preserved intact to show the glories of their architecture and the brilliant fantasy of their frescoes.

Broadly speaking, there are three main periods. The earliest was previous to the rise of the Nemanja dynasty. At this time Byzantine influence was paramount, architecture was almost purely Byzantine in type, and the frescoes are still conventional and two-dimensional in style, often with the gold ground in imitation of mosaic. Many of them were, however, rebuilt or redecorated under the Nemanjas, the greatest period of Serbian medieval art, which lasted throughout the late twelfth, the thirteenth, and the fourteenth centuries.

An original Serbo-Byzantine school then began to develop. Fresco painting became more realistic, greater attention was paid to nature and to expression; portraits began really to represent their subjects, and little by little there grew up a three-dimensional 'Renaissance' style of Serbian painting which strongly supports the view held by several prominent scholars that, had it not been for the Turkish invasions, the great period of Renaissance art might have begun in the Balkans and not in Italy.

Fresco painting continued to develop in the churches and monasteries built under the Serbian despots of the fifteenth century, but architecture tended to become too

florid, and after the conquest of the entire country by the Turks all art and architecture came to a stop. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there is little or nothing.

The third period of Serbian architecture reveals an art in decadence. The many Serbian monasteries built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on Austrian or Hungarian soil still show traces of the national Serbo-Byzantine architecture, as at Kovilj in the Bačka, but these are gradually ousted by the growing influence of Austrian Baroque, and the monasteries of the Fruška Gora have little in common with those of the great centuries of Serbian medieval art.

All the monasteries of the early period have been extensively rebuilt or redecorated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by Slav architects and artists. One of the best preserved is that of St. Panteleimon at Nerezi, built in 1164 by Alexis Comnenos, the Byzantine governor, on the mountain slopes to the west of that city. The architecture is of the purest Byzantine school. The wonderful marble ikonostas has been broken, but the fragments are preserved. The frescoes are of various dates. Some, near the altar, are the work of Greek painters, while many others have been added by Slav artists. The name of one of them, Stojka, has been preserved. A few have been repainted in the nineteenth century, which certainly adds to their quaintness, but destroys much of their beauty and value.

Among the oldest monasteries are those around the lake of Ohrid. Ohrid was the home of the saints Kliment and Naum, disciples of the first Slavonic apostles, Cyril and Methodius, and as early as the tenth century became a centre of Slavonic culture and Christianity, whose influence extended as far as distant Russia. At the time of the Serbian Emperor Dušan there were said to be more than a hundred churches and monasteries along the shores of the lake. More than forty still remain in



STREET IN OHRID



various stages of preservation. Some of them date back to the tenth and eleventh centuries, but almost all underwent some degree of restoration between 1334 and 1400, when many of the finest were built.

The oldest and most famous of these is the basilica of St. Sofia, at one time the cathedral of the Archbishops of Ohrid. It was built in the ninth century on the ruins of a pagan temple. In Turkish times it was changed into a mosque, the frescoes covered over, the pulpit changed into a mimbar, and a minaret—now removed—was added. But a good deal of careful restoration has been done, and the fine frescoes are being cleaned of their chalk covering and are little the worse for their long banishment. They provide an interesting contrast between Byzantine and Serbian art. The earliest were painted by order of the Greek Archbishop Leo between 1025 and 1056. They are the oldest and finest Byzantine frescoes in Yugoslavia. But there are also fine sequences painted in the latter, more naturalistic, Serbian style of the fourteenth century, including a Vision of the Last Judgment.

After the conversion of St. Sofia into a mosque, the church of St. Kliment became the cathedral. It was built by the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus II, but was much enlarged under Serbian rule seventy years later. Among the frescoes is a fine sequence of the life of Nebuchadnezzar.

I will not weary the reader with an account of all the churches and monasteries of Ohrid. Those that the visitor will see, even without any special interest in fresco, are those of St. Jovan Bogoslov, probably built during the reign of Tsar Dušan, on a rocky cliff overlooking the lake near the city of Ohrid, and that of the Virgin of Zahumlje, usually known as St. Naum, on another rock at the far end of the lake some thirty odd kilometres away. The old church was founded in the ninth century, but extensively renovated in the thirteenth.



The frescoes, though quaint, have been repainted at various dates. The belfry is new, replacing an older one. It is not a happy addition, being in concrete, which is a most unsuitable addition. Also the frescoes, by the Russian painter Kolesnikov, are terrible and quite unworthy of comparison with the older masters. Among the martyrs he has placed Tsar Nicholas II.

At the risk of forsaking the sublime for the ridiculous, I must tell a good story about St. Naum. Part has been told already, but not all.

In 1929 there was a frontier dispute about St. Naum, the site being claimed by both Yugoslavs and Albanians. In fact, the monks were of both nationalities. Both sides wrote long and impassioned appeals to all the chancelleries of Europe, including the British Foreign Office.

One petition, sent by the Albanians, stated the monks of St. Naum were so incensed at the idea that it might be handed over to Yugoslavia that, if this were the case, they would be forced to violate their vows.

Unfortunately the typist, in copying this document, put a 'c' in place of a 'v' in the last word.

When the document, thus typed, appeared at the Foreign Office, it was handed to a well-known official. He merely looked at it for a moment, and then added a marginal note: 'A clear case for the intervention of the Papal bull.'

But to return to our monasteries. One of the oldest and most beautiful of all is Studenica, in the Ibar valley. Its iguman had precedence over the other abbots, and held the title of Grand Archimandrite, and presided over the council that elected the Patriarch and bishops. It was the first and greatest of the 'royal monasteries' which had a certain autonomy and owed allegiance directly to the king. The church itself, of white marble, already shows traces of Western influence in its construction, especially in the details of doors and windows, which are more Romanesque than Byzantine. It was founded about

1183 by the Grand Župan Stefan Nemanja. Several of the original twelfth-century frescoes have remained intact, including a fine portrait of St. Sava. Others were restored with care and reverence, so that the church as a whole has retained its artistic unity. The original frescoes were added after the death of Nemanja by his son Vukan, who, with many other members of the Nemanja family, is buried here.

I cannot here describe all the great monasteries of South Serbia. So I will only mention them. The finest are blood-red Žiča, the Coronation church of the Serbian Kings, near Kraljevo; Mileševo, near Prijepolje in Bosnia, built by King Vladislav between 1234 and 1243, where St. Sava was buried; Sopočani, built by Uroš I in 1265, near Raška; the church of the Virgin at Matejić, built somewhere before 1300, and perched like an eagle's nest on the mountains overlooking the Kumanovo plain; Treskavac, originally Byzantine, but rebuilt by Dušan in 1335; the Holy Archangel at Prilep; the Church of St. George at Staro Nagoričane, near Kumanovo, built by King Milutin in 1313; Gračanica on the field of Kosovo, the most imposing architecturally of all the Serbian churches, also a foundation of King Milutin, and Dečani.

After the fall of the Serbian power in the south, after the battle of Kosovo in 1389, the tradition of monastery building was continued by the Serbian despots (that, by the way, is a title and not a description), who maintained an independent state in the northern part of Serbia near the Danube, with their capital now at Belgrade and now at Smederevo. They are of particular interest, as they display the purest development of the Serbian style which was now quite independent of Byzantine influences. The frescoes, too, are quite original in style. Of the many monasteries built during the first part of the fifteenth century, the most interesting are Lazarica, Ljubostinja, and Kalenić in the Šumadija, Markov

Monastir near Skoplje, and, above all, the great monastery of Resava or Manasija, built by the despot Stefan Lazarević in the last years of Serbian independence. It is defended by huge stone walls, with flanking towers, and at first sight looks more like a fortress than a monastery. But the church is among the most beautiful in the country, and the contrast between its peaceful cupolas and rich carvings and frescoes and the bleak stone fortifications is particularly striking.

But to return to my journey. At Peć I was seduced by the high-sounding title of the Hotel Imperial to forsake my old and trusted friend in the main street, where I had often stayed before. To tell the truth, there was not much wrong with it, save that it was by no means imperial. The food was good and the beds clean, but a French professor, who was stopping the night there on his way to Cetinje, was vocally indignant about the public offices, which were situated between two pigsties!

There was the usual colourful throng in the main street. Perhaps to a newcomer they would be wildly exciting. But one of the disadvantages of looking at anything for a long time is that one cannot see it at all. There were Albanians in black and white national dress, with trousers hitched so precariously on their hips that they seemed in imminent danger of falling off. There were Montenegrin 'serdars' in full dress, mostly pensioned soldiers, for Peć is a town of pensioners. There were grave, bearded Orthodox priests, with faces like Byzantine Christs. There were the usual Moslem women in veils and 'fleabags', often with silk stockings and Paris shoes peeking out beneath. There were pert little girls in loose baggy trousers and tight-fitting bodices—too young, these, to have to have the veil. There were Orthodox peasant women in the brightly-coloured embroideries of the Metohija national costume. A brilliant throng, indeed, but one to which I have grown accustomed. But one passer-by made even me sit up and take

notice. An Albanian in national costume was leading an ox-waggon down the main street. In it was his wife. She was wearing a black veil over a white dress, and a pair of bright cerise woollen gloves!

Naturally I had come to Peć to see the Patriarchate. It lies in the mouth of the great Rugovo gorge, so that the mountains seem to make a frame around its squat cupolas. It is a strange building, composed not of one medieval church, but three, so that it is full of frescoes, corridors leading nowhere in particular, and changing floor levels. But it is saturated with the spirit of history.

The seat of the Serbian Orthodox Church was moved there in 1346, when seven-gated Žiča was too close to the Hungarian frontier, under the reign of Tsar Dušan. It was in that year also that the Serbian Archbishop was advanced to the rank of a Patriarch and crowned his master as Emperor of Serbs, Greeks, and Albanians, the future ruler of the Byzantine Empire, had not the Turks come and destroyed his wide-flung plans. He was crowned at Skoplje, not only by the Serbian Patriarch, but by the Bulgarian and the Greek Archbishop of Ohrid.

But the role of Peć was to be less brilliant, though equally glorious. Under Turkish rule, the Christian peasants became *raja*, that is to say, subject peoples, more or less in the position of serfs. The temporal power was little by little destroyed. The only national institution left was the church, which was a centre of national feeling made doubly strong by the sharp religious cleavage between Moslem and Christian. But it was too dangerous a centre. Shortly after the fall of Smederevo in 1459, the Serbian Patriarchate was abolished by the Turks, and the spiritual power exercised by the Greek Archbishops of Ohrid. But the national feeling was still kept alive by the Serbian priests, and even more by the national poetry. The darker side of feudal times was forgotten, and a tradition created of the good old days of freedom.

In 1557, however, the Serbian Patriarchate was again revived by the Grand Vezir, Mehmed Sokolović, one of the many Serb Bosnians who had accepted Islam and risen to high rank. He appointed his relative Makarije, a monk of Hilendar, to the Patriarch. Thus Peć became once more a national and cultural centre for the Serbs. The Patriarch was acknowledged as spiritual chief of his people, and to some extent represented them also in temporal matters. Churches and monasteries began to be repaired and rebuilt, and Church books copied and distributed. It was a time of spiritual regeneration, though on a modest scale, as the Church was never allowed to grow too powerful under Turkish rule.

After Makarije's death in 1574, his successors began to dream dreams of national liberation. They entered into negotiations with the Western powers, Austria and Russia, and stirred up revolts against Turkish rule, such as that of Voevod Grdan in the Hercegovina. Missions were sent to the courts of Russia and the Moldavian Prince Bassarab, and even to Rome.

Almost all the Peć Patriarchs became involved in these patriotic intrigues, and matters came to a head during the Austro-Turkish wars of the seventeenth century, when Serb volunteers actively assisted the Austrian troops. The Patriarch Arsenius III was forced to fly, and in 1690 crossed the Danube into Austrian territory with a very large number of Serbian families. This was known as the Great Migration, and was a turning-point in the history of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The successor of Arsenius, Kalinik I, succeeded in calming the outraged Turks, but his successors attempted yet another rebellion during the Austro-Turkish war of 1737, and only managed to save his life by flight. The power of the Peć Patriarchs declined rapidly, and in 1766 was finally abolished. From then until the Serbian insurrection of 1804 most of the higher clergy in the Serbian land under Ottoman rule were Greeks.



FROM TETOVO IN SOUTH SERBIA. WATCHING A WEDDING  
PROCESSION



Incidentally the Great Migration accounts for the large number of Albanians in these districts. When the Serb families left, they descended from their mountains and colonized the rich valleys of the Metohija and Kosovo, where very many of them still remain.

The Patriarchate, however, continued to exist at Sremski Karlovci in pre-war Hungary, and still carried out its role as a centre for the Serbs, this time those under Austro-Hungarian rule. But after the liberation the dignity was revived, and the present Dr. Gavrilović holds the proud titles of Serbian Patriarch, Archbishop of Peć, and Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci.

Next evening, waiting for my train to Skoplje, I felt thoroughly bored. It was getting late, but I could not feel sleepy, although I had to rise early the next morning. So I decided to explore Peć; hitherto I had known only the main streets. The town is cleaned in the Turkish manner; that is to say, swift streams of water run along the streets carrying away all dust, dirt, and other rubbish thrown into them. When they are really swift, as at Peć, the system is quite efficient, though street-sweepers have been introduced as well, to take the place of the pariah dogs which are a bit too casual and indiscriminate for Yugoslav tastes. I do not know what the towns of modern Turkey are like; but the Yugoslavs have certainly improved the systems of pre-war Turkey.

Street-lighting in Peć is inadequate. So I carefully oriented myself by a minaret and took a note of the direction in which the streams were running before setting out. Then I dived into a maze of side-streets.

All the side-streets in Peć are more or less the same, as all residential houses open on to an inner court and show nothing to the outer world but an eyeless wall, with perhaps one tiny latticed window for a porter, or for the very mild Moslem flirtation where the lover can scarcely catch a glimpse of his beloved. After wandering through a labyrinth of these in the dark, I picked out



the minaret once more and a stream, and made for the Hotel Imperial.

Alas, it was a different mosque and a different stream, and it was too dark to see the shapes of the mountains. In a few moments I was very thoroughly lost.

I looked about me to see some one of whom I could ask the way. But I must have been some way from the main street, for everything was silent and deserted. In the daylight Peć seems insignificant, although it covers an area quite out of proportion to the number of its inhabitants. But in the dark it seemed enormous. So it was with a sigh of relief that I saw a man coming towards me.

He turned out to be a rich Moslem beg. But he was also a very friendly and up-to-date young man, with a brother in the Yugoslav Air Force. Instead of retiring into disgruntled obscurity after the loss of his serfs, he had taken to trade and continued to prosper. He invited me to his house, a rare honour for a stranger and a 'Frank'.

From the outside it seemed like all the others; a mere mud wall, topped with tiles. But inside it was beautiful, especially in the velvety darkness. The garden was pleasant with the sound of running water, and somewhere in the poplars a nightingale was singing. He called for lights, and we sat in the čardak-balcony on fat billowy cushions, drinking rose cordial, until dawn.

Therefore the contrast seemed yet greater when I came at last to Markov Monastir. I went there with a very dear friend, in a rickety old fiacre, the only vehicle that would accept us. For there is no road to Markov Monastir, and a taxi would soon come to grief in the river bottom which we had to ford. We started early, before the sun grew too intense.

It was the typical landscape of South Serbia, a landscape that one grows to love, and which always forces one to return. The way lay along a fertile valley, through fields of tobacco, opium, and maize. On the right were

the snow-capped peaks of the Sara. Along the road, peasants in national costume greeted us courteously. In the river valleys, now muddy and parched by the heats of high summer, clumsy water-buffaloes wallowed contentedly. It is hard work prodding one of these out of his muddy lair. The road, if road it could be called, was bordered by graceful avenues of poplars.

We passed through two villages, one Turkish, built of ramshackle mud-brick houses, with the ruins of a *čifluk* or Turkish manor-house recalling the feudal times not so long distant, the other Serb, better kept and cleaner, where a hospitable householder stopped us for a glass of *rakija*.

Then on, along a mountain stream, and up into the foothills.

The first sight of Marko's monastery was lovely. We came upon it suddenly over the crest of a tiny hill. The beautiful old fourteenth-century church rose proudly out of a circle of heavily-built walls, with a massive iron-studded gate, and, behind, the monastery buildings with broad wooden balconies open to the sun and wind. Everything seemed silent. We hammered at the great gates.

The Father Superior opened them to us. Nowadays not many Serbs become monks, and many of the finest monasteries have only a single inmate. Father Damaskin lived here alone, with a few monastery servants. We unharnessed the horses and left them and the fiacre in the shade under a trellis of vines near the well in the huge courtyard. Then we went upstairs for coffee and 'slatko,' jam served with glasses of cold water, the traditional commencement of Serbian hospitality.

Father Damaskin was a young and intelligent man, with a deep sense of piety, yet with a quick wit and curiously sad eyes. He had been one of the 'aces' of the Yugoslav Air Force, but had been so damaged in a crash that he was no longer fit for active life, and had retired

to this life of service and meditation. The monastery lands are large, and he had plenty to do.

He had taken over the control of the monastery a few years before, when old Makarije, his predecessor, had died. His grave—'Makarije, the Slave of God'—showed white and raw on a tiny mound before the church.

Thither we went. It is small, as are most of the Serbian churches, for the great religious gatherings are held in the open air. But it is of singular beauty. The walls are covered with frescoes of the best period, that of the first Turkish invasions. Over the doorway the patron saint Demetrius bears on the crupper of his horse a tiny black-robed archimandrite, who repaired the church in Turkish times. Beneath the feet of his charger is a Turkish warrior with broken yataghan and spear. But this is of later date. Within, the frescoes of Vukašin and Marko still dazzle one with their beauty.

One, in particular, kept me gazing long. It represents Rachel mourning for her slaughtered children. They are grouped around her, hieratically stiff and dressed in white, the Oriental colour of mourning. She, among them, lifts her hands to heaven in an attitude of compassionate despair, as if hoping for the day of deliverance that was not to come until 1912, nearly six hundred years after her pictured plaint. What feelings must that fresco have aroused in all those long darkened years?

We had intended to go back the same day, but Father Damaskin entreated us to stay. Why not? The monastery had plenty of guest-rooms, seldom used. So we sat in the wide čardak-balcony and drank wine and chatted till the shadows fell over the courtyard and the white chalk cliff on the far side of the stream looked like some silent and forgotten waterfall.

We slept well that night, though Father Damaskin, as a precautionary measure, arranged our rooms far from one another, on opposite sides of the courtyard.

'After all', he said, 'this is a monastery.'

I woke early. Outside my window the stream was murmuring pleasantly. The nightingale had ceased, but the crickets were still chirping and the frogs had not ceased their night-long concert. A dawn wind was gently stirring the poplars, and the first rays of golden sunlight were just beginning to touch the cupola and balconies. I was peaceful and content, with the present and with the past. It seemed a good moment, while the dream was still present, to leave South Serbia.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

THERE is an abundant literature on Yugoslavia, but a large number of the books printed are of very little real value. For those who want to know more about the country, I attach a short list of books, which are either instructive or interesting, and, I hope, in most cases both. I assume the reader does not know Serbo-Croatian, so am not including any works in that language.

The best general account of the people and their way of life is still *La Peninsule Balkanique* of Jovan Cvijič. An excellent account, if a trifle dry, of the progress made since the war in South Serbia, is *La Macedoine* by Jacques Ancel. The Abbé Fortis will already be familiar to all who have read this book. An English translation of his *Voyage in Dalmatia* was published in London in 1787. There is, I believe, a later edition, but cannot trace it. The best modern accounts are *Yugoslavia* by J. Patterson in the 'Modern States' series, which is more political, and my own *Profane Pilgrimage*, which deals more extensively with South Serbia than I have in this book. Bernard Newman's *Albanian Backdoor* is interesting and, on the whole, reliable. The Albanian backdoor in question is Ohrid. Louis Adamic's *The Native's Return* has some very lovely descriptions and some extraordinarily tendentious politics.

There is no good general history available in English. Those that have appeared are sketchy and usually tendentious. The best sketch of Bosnian history is included in Sir Arthur Evans' *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection*, 1877, a most interesting book. The same sorry story is told in *The European Provinces of Turkey* by Miss Irby and Miss Mackenzie, also from first-hand experience. Louis Vojnovič has published a *Histoire de Dalmatie*, which is interesting reading. Von Ranke's *History of the Serbian Insurrection* is not only good history but remarkably beautiful prose. He had the advantage of knowing some of the leaders of the insurrection personally. There is a good English translation. Konstantin Jireček's *History of the Serbs* goes,

unfortunately, only up to 1570. It is a necessary book for every student, but very dry reading. It is published in German and Serbo-Croat. The same remark applies also to his other historical studies. For the political history of just before the Great War and also for minority questions, the best guide is Professor Seton-Watson.

A good general history of the Balkans, including Serbia and Montenegro, but not Croatia, Slovenia, and Dalmatia, is Miller's *The Ottoman Empire and its Successors*. Recent editions have supplements to bring it up to date. Miss Waring's *Serbia* in the Home University Library is beautifully written, but is a war book, and therefore somewhat heated in tone. Professor Temperley's *History of Serbia* is second only to Von Ranke. A detailed and interesting history of Serbia in the nineteenth century by an American professor is appearing sporadically in the *Slavonic Review*. I do not know when it will be completed.

The best book on Dalmatian art and architecture is F. Jackson's *Dalmatia, Istria, and the Quarnero*, 1887. No writer has yet approached its quality in any language. *Slovene Medieval Art* by Fran Stele, published in Ljubljana, is a magnificent work on a special subject, with French and English text. Professor Gabriel Millet has published some good books on Serbian medieval frescoes, in French.

Professor Bernhard Gesemann has written on Yugoslav literature in German and Dragutin Subotić has published a study, *Yugoslav National Ballads*, in English, which contains many of the best translations. There is an accurate, but rather pedestrian, translation of the *Mountain Wreath* (Gorski Vijenac) by J. Wiles. Owen Meredith's *Serbski Pesme* (sic!) are terrible.

A good study of Yugoslav folk-lore in English, from a medical aspect, is *Healing Ritual* by P. Kemp. There is no good general study on the subject in English. *Unclean Blood* is an interesting study by Bora Stanković, in novel form. An English translation has been published under the title of *Sofka*.

There are several novels dealing with Yugoslavia. Most of them are bad. Those that are good include *Orient Express* by van Doolgaard, *Balkan Monastery* by Stephen Graham, and *Illyrian Spring* by Ann Bridge. There is a good deal of novelist's licence in all three.

There is no good guide-book of Yugoslavia in English, though I believe that Miss Muriel Currey is now engaged on writing one. At the moment the best guide-books are Herbert Taub's *Führer durch Jugoslawien*, 1929, which is somewhat out of date, and, of local interest, *Slowenien* by Rudolf Badura. Mrs. F. Copeland has also published a very handy little mountaineers' guide of Slovenia, which is obtainable in Ljubljana.

The Central Press Bureau at Belgrade also publishes some useful little books in French: *La Yougoslavie par les Chiffres* (annually), *Belgrade*, *Les Penseurs Yougoslaves*, *Histoire de Yougoslavie*, by the late Professor Stanoje Stanojević, and *La Littérature Yougoslave*. They give a good general idea.

Mr. David Footman has also written several amusing and witty books about Yugoslavia, some, such as *Balkan Holiday* openly, others, like most of his novels, with the Yugoslav localities very thinly concealed under various pseudonyms.

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